MARCH

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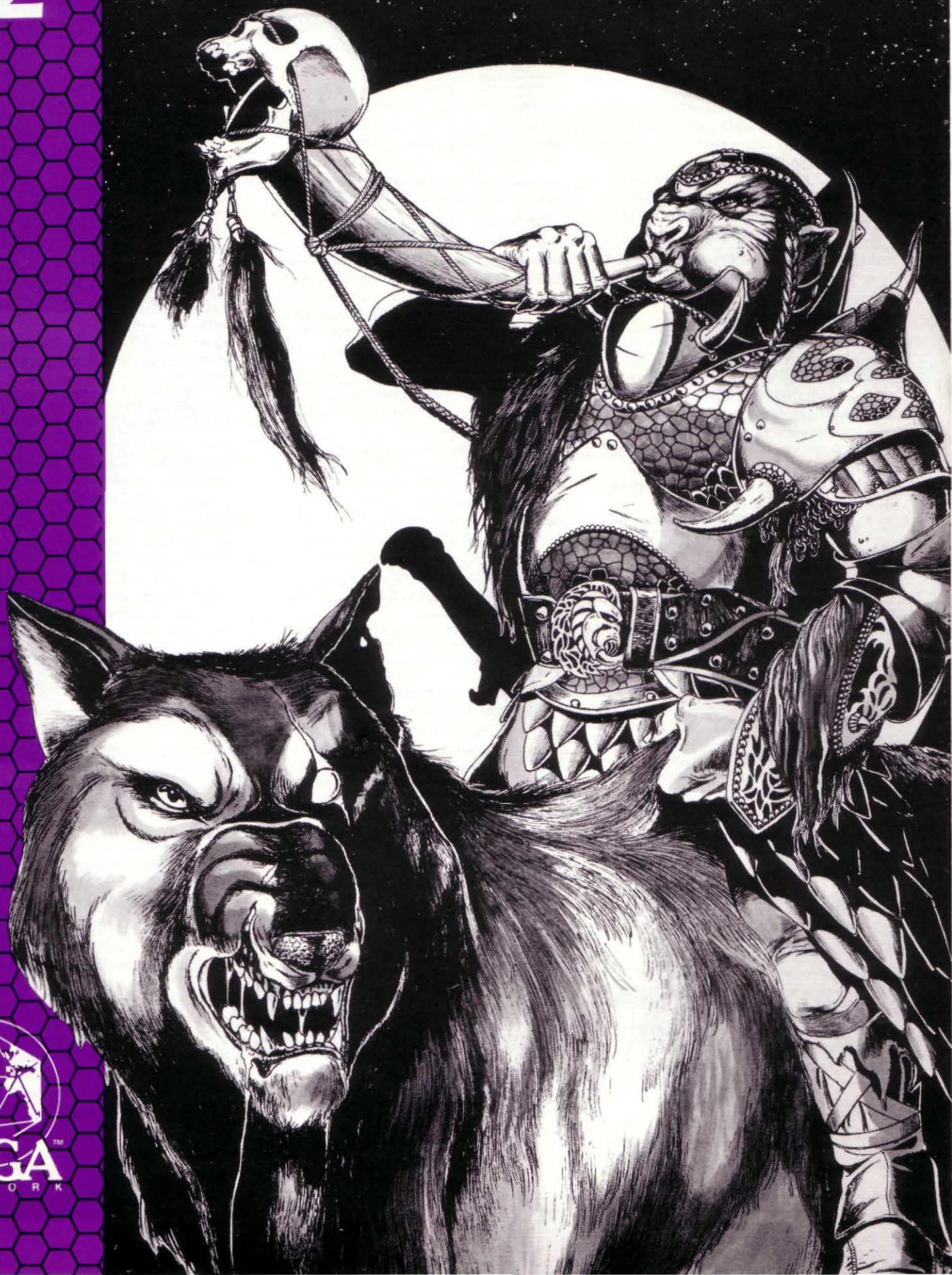
Polyhedron™

NEWSZINE



RPGA™ NETWORK

Classifieds

Connecticut Wanted: players and DMs for a fantasy role-playing game campaign. I am also interested in starting a new campaign with the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game or the GAMMA WORLD® game or Battletech. Please contact: Toby Wilmott at 203-968-2602.

Indiana Wanted: gamers in Lebanon, IN or in Lafayette, IN. Contact: Michael Parks, P.O. Box 352, Lafayette, IN 47905, or call 317-423-5498.

New York My group and I are located in southwestern NY in the Olean, Alleghaheny, and Portville area. We are looking for fellow adventurers to join us in our AD&D® game campaign. We have nine members and are looking for more to form an RPGA™ Network club. If you are serious and interested, call Chris at 716-372-3239, or write to 1015 West Henley, Olean, NY 14760.

New York 27-year-old male gamer seeks other players and Game Masters for the AD&D game in the Orange County area. I would like to play once or twice a month. Contact: Joel Santos, P.O. Box 1034 Goshen, NY 10924, or call 914-294-8483 between 6 and 10 p.m.

Ohio Wanted: A group to game with. I have played the D&D® game for seven years, the AD&D game for four years. I also have played the STAR FRONTIERS® game, MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, Battletech, and Doctor Who. If you are interested, please write me: Sean O'Connor, 3454 Folk Road, Lot 268, Springfield, OH 45502.

Ohio I am a 15-year-old new Network member looking for players in the Cleveland area and the suburbs. I play the AD&D game. Please call 216-291-2137, or write to: Seth Wilhelm, 25449 Cedar Rd., Lyndhurst, OH 44122.

Oklahoma Seeking AD&D game adventurers in the Tulsa, OK area. I prefer older players, you need not be experienced. DM has 10 years of experience, fellowship of three players have 11 years combined. The campaign is in the true D&D game fashion. Call: J'lall at 479-6427 and leave a message.

Pennsylvania 17-year-old male gamer seeks players and Game Masters. I mostly play the AD&D game, but I will play other games. I am looking to form a group and need members—mainly in Germantown. Write to: Mike Hibberd, 4921 Royal St., Philadelphia, PA 19144.

Pennsylvania Wanted: any and all role-players in the Philadelphia area. You must be at least age 14. My interests are the AD&D game, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Middle Earth, and Battletech. I am soon to get the Dr. Who role-playing game. If you are interested, call Sean at 215-332-5593.

Texas ARGH (Association of Role-playing Gamers of Houston) is looking for RPGA Network members interested in forming a Network Club. ARGH publishes "Arghazine," a quarterly club magazine, and we hope to sponsor a local convention with RPGA Network sanctioned events. Help us bring the RPGA Network to Houston in a big way! For more information, contact Stephen Bonario, Association Director, at 7829 Cook Rd., Houston, TX 77072, or call 713-666-6341.

Puerto Rico 18-year-old male player looking for Game Masters in the metropolitan area. I play the AD&D game, TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game, STAR FRONTIERS game, Recon, Twilight 2000, and others. Contact: Enrique X. Pineiro, Victoria St. D-92, Forestview, Bayamon, PR 00620, or call 809-780-9907.

General Wanted: Pen pals from those long-distance places or from short distances. I'm mainly interested in the A&D game and computer products, but I'm willing to learn others. I'm a 15-year-old male DM/player, and I'm very energetic when it comes to role-playing. Girls are welcome to write, too! Hank Gorbsky, 10 Hickory Lane, Garnerville, NY 10923-1906

General I am forced by my parents to move ALL of my D&D game stuff out when I leave for college. Therefore, I am willing to sell my ENTIRE collection of modules, rule books, and everything else. I have almost everything ever published by TSR for the game, including rules written in foreign languages. Almost everything in mint condition; some even shrink-wrapped. This stuff will go very cheap, so call or send SASE today. Contact: Elton C. Twork, 3273 Appleton Road, Scottville, MI, 49454, or phone 616-757-2647 or 616-757-3947.

General Looking for players and game masters to start PBMs for the AD&D game, MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, TOP SECRET/S.I. game, Paranoia, and Star Wars. All ages welcome. Contact: Mutant Fodder, 141 Campbell Ave., Yorkville, NY 13495.

General I am a 15-year-old boy who would like a pen pal. My interests include the D&D® game, espionage, and science fiction. Anyone is welcome to write as long as you are between ages 13 and 21. Write to: Jeff King, 114 Seventh Street, Black Mtn., NC 28711.

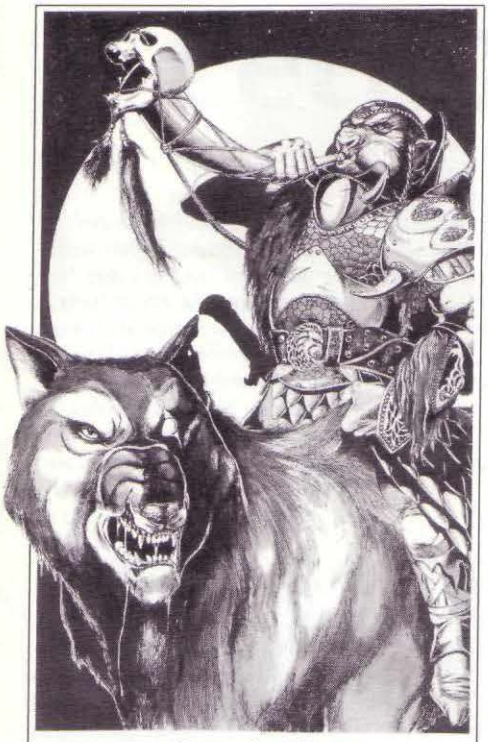
General Gaming material for sale. Everything from the AD&D game to Traveller 2300 is being sold at very reasonable prices. Write to: Peter Ingraham, 5944 S. Hogenson Rd., Scottville, MI 49454.

General 16-year-old gamer from Sydney, Australia seeks pen pal, any age or sex. Interested in Paranoia, AD&D game, STAR FRONTIERS® game, Diplomacy, Call of Cthulhu, Judge Dredd, and others. I am willing to learn other systems. Other interests: computer gaming (Amiga and IBM), watching videos, and science fiction. John Patruno, 151 Bunnerong Rd., Kingsford, Sydney, Australia 2032.

General Wanted: people with 1st through 3rd level characters to play in a play-by-mail game. You will be playing with people who are just starting, so you need to help them out. If interested write: Shaun Hoadly, 2928 Haynie, Ft. Worth, TX 76112.

General For sale: GAMMA WORLD game 3rd edition with Legion Of Gold adventure, TOP SECRET/S.I. game, and Powers & Perils game. For prices write to: Chuck Galenek, 155 Claudia Drive, Stratford, CT 06497.

General I am seeking a pen pal in the U.S. who is interested in writing novels, short stories, and dungeons. I also am interested in corresponding with anyone who enjoys the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign setting. I would also like to learn about conventions. I never have been to one. Write to: Travis Hilterbrand, 2832 Sherry, Arnold, MO 63010.



About the Cover

Artist James Holloway rendered this charming fellow and his companion. But it's up to you to tell us about the pair. See the Notes From HQ section for a new contest.

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Polyhedron™ NEWSZINE

Volume 10, Number 2
Issue #52, March, 1990

SPECIAL MODULE FEATURE

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A band of loyal troubleshooters must take on a secret society of gamers in the name of The Computer in this romp for West End Game's Paranoia. But if the group isn't careful, they won't be seeing red much longer.
Illustrated by James Holloway.

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This addition for I.C.E.'s Rolemaster covers fighting from horseback and includes information on equestrian equipment.

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The city streets are clean, but not necessarily safe, thanks to the Ravens Bluff Sanitation Facility.

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Notes From HQ

What We Publish And Why

This month, Associate Editor Skip Williams takes over Notes and addresses some recurring questions.

Occasionally, we at HQ are asked who really edits the Newszine and who decides what gets printed in it. The answers to these simple questions are complex.

Who's Behind The Newszine

This question usually is asked by people who have a gripe. They want to know who decided to publish a particular article, or why another article was rejected, or why particular changes were made in a manuscript.

The answer to these questions is plainly printed on every issue's title page. Jean and I share all the editorial work; nothing gets printed in the Newszine without at least the tacit approval of both editors. For example, Jean usually writes this column, but I edit the copy. The process has been reversed in this issue. Likewise, I usually work on each issue's module first, but Jean double checks the final draft. In fact, everything that goes into the Newszine is read at least four times, twice by each editor; sometimes we ask some of our co-workers for an extra proofreading or two. Jean and I also decide what goes into the Newszine. In spite of frequent allegations to the contrary, the management at TSR, Inc. is not in the habit of meddling with the Newszine's content. That statement should be qualified. The owner of any publication ultimately is responsible for its content. But, like most well-managed periodicals, the Newszine is run by its editors.

What Gets Published

Members, and only members, of the RPGA™ Network who submit publishable material in accordance with the Newszine's submission guidelines (which are available by writing HQ) are entitled to be published in the Newszine. We have not tried to strictly define what is publishable. When Jean and I look at a manuscript, we ask ourselves the following questions:

Is the content useful? Does the piece contain facts that are accurate and relevant to the members' current or continuing interests? "Facts" include game rules, original concepts, and real world information. Are the facts examined and analyzed in a way that can increase the reader's knowledge and understanding of the subject? A mere listing of the facts cannot do this. Is the author careful to separate opinion from fact? This can be hard to do in a gaming article, particularly in fantasy articles where the facts can be imaginary. However, even a "fantasy fact" has some basis in reality, even if the reality is embodied in a story or set of game rules. Opinions, by definition, cannot be proved. Is the material original? Just because an article isn't plagiarized doesn't necessarily mean it's original. An article has to offer brand new concepts or offer fresh insights on old concepts to be original. If the material is for use in one of our regular features, such as *The Living City,* has the author followed the feature's format? Was something important (such as an AD&D® game character's spell books) left out?

Is the writing effective? Does the material grab the reader's attention and hold it through the entire article? Does the author obviously know the subject? Are the ideas, even the difficult and complex ones, presented clearly and explained completely? Does the author get to the point and stay there? Is the writing active and readable, not passive and obscure? Does the author use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation?

The answers to most of these questions are subjective, but we try to give each submission we get an even break.

What We're Looking For

The Newszine has a constant need for material for its *Living City* and *New Rogues Gallery* features. (We also need material for our series of *Living City* products.) Fortunately, we're getting just about enough of those right now. The real need is for feature articles. Almost any gaming topic goes for these: "How to" pieces, such as *Screening the Game in issue #49*; rules expansions such as *Spy School* in issue #51; advice and commentary, such as *By the Book* in issue #48, and others are welcome. If you work in the industry, we're willing to interview you in articles like *The Bookwyrm* in this issue, or preview your products in articles like *Ghostbusters Revisited* in issue #49. A steady supply of fresh material is essential for the Newszine's continued health, and we're counting on you, the readers, to provide it.

This Issue's Contest

This month, our contest is illustrated on the Newszine's cover. Just who and what are the two beings shown there? You tell us. Send complete game statistics, backgrounds, and personalities for the pair. Any popular game system will do. As always, all entries must be typed, double spaced, and each submission should include the author's name, address, and membership number in the upper right hand corner of the first page. Each subsequent page should include the author's name in the upper right hand corner. No submission should exceed six typed pages. Members are allowed to collaborate, but if you win dividing the prize is your problem.

The prize is five pewter fantasy figures from Ral Partha Enterprises.

All submissions must be postmarked on or before May 1st, 1990.

Remember The Drive

The RPGA Network's 1990 membership drive continues to March 30. All membership forms postmarked by that date will be included in the contest. The Network member who encourages the most people to join the Network will be awarded the original piece of cover art from POLYHEDRON Newszine #50. Remember, do not collect member forms or money; let the prospective member send in their own forms. Just tell them to put your name and membership number on the sponsor line.

Good Luck and good gaming,

Skip ❑

Letters

The 50th Newszine

I think issue #50 looked great. The red color you picked for the interior is excellent and I like the way you used it. I also like the way you've managed not to repeat a color since the revamp in issue #40. However, in the future I think you should stay away from religious colors (like red and green) in the December issues. Not every member has the same religion, and there is no reason to offend any of them with something as simple as color.

My compliments to Fran Hart for *It Takes One to Play One.*

The *Notes from HQ* column in #50 said that each issue's mailing label would have the member's expiration date. There was no such date on my label, just my address and membership number.

I've got a couple of suggestions: How about picking out a new dingbat? Marking the end of each article is a good idea, but seeing the same symbol all the time is monotonous. Why not revive the old *Lost and Presumed Gaming* subtitle when you list the names members you've lost contact with? When Jean Rabe closes the *Notes* column, why not insert her signature?

I've noticed that the maps in the Newszine look like they were produced on a Macintosh computer. Do you use a "Mac" to generate maps and floorplans? They also look like they are printed on an Imagewriter II printer. Am I right?

Aaron Goldblatt,
Fort Worth, Tx

We picked the interior color for issue #50 to complement the cover art. A vivid shade of red was included on the cover because that color is associated with Gunder Gaewilder's deity, Flandal Steelskin. As far as the Newszine staff is concerned, this is the only "religious" significance the color red has.

We liked It Takes One to Play One, *too, and we're sure Fran will appreciate the compliment.*

We'll check with our colleagues in the TSR, Inc. computer department about expiration dates on mailing labels. Was anybody else missing the date?

We do run Jean's signature from time to time, but Notes From HQ *usually runs so long there isn't any space for a signature. Re-introducing* Lost and Presumed Gaming *is a good idea. If you ever find a friend's name (or your own) under this heading, contact HQ right away so the missing person can start getting Newszines again.*

The dingbat we are using is part of the Newszine's typography, or overall layout. It is one of the consistent design elements which give the Newszine its distinctive look. The dingbat won't change until the staff is ready to redesign the whole magazine.

Our cartographer, Guy McLimore, does indeed use a Macintosh computer. We sometimes use Imagewriter printouts, but we prefer to use a laser printer to produce maps whenever possible. We think laser-printed maps look better.

Where Charity Begins

Over the past few years the world has suffered disasters that have devastated cities and lives. The earthquakes in Armenia, Mexico City, and most recently in California, along with hurricane Hugo in the Carribean and Southeastern United States have taken a toll in life and property damage that totals billions of dollars. One agency has been there to help after each disaster.

The volunteers of the American Red Cross have taken it upon themselves to run to the aid of disaster victims. They do not wait for the government to finish disaster relief paperwork or for the victims to ask for help, they just go. They provide blood, supplies, money, and just plain old-fashioned reassurance that someone cares. This assistance is given without regard to political objectives, whose picture gets into the paper, or how loudly the victims cheer as the Red Cross enters or leaves a town.

Unfortunately, these disasters are beginning to overwhelm even the Red Cross. There have been too many, too close together, and the Red Cross's disaster relief fund is running dry.

Each year at the GEN CON® Game Fair our Network runs one game event whose proceeds are donated to a deserving charity. I propose that this year's charity be the Red Cross. Furthermore, I propose that the entry fee for the char-

Continued on page 30

POLYHEDRON™ Newszine (the official newsletter of TSR, Inc.'s ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network) is published bi-monthly by TSR, Inc. The mailing address for all correspondence is: P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. Telephone: (414) 248-3625.

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POLYHEDRON Newszine welcomes unsolicited submissions of written material and artwork. No responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. No submissions will be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope of sufficient size.

Unless special arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication, materials submitted to the Publisher for publication in POLYHEDRON Newszine are accepted solely upon the condition that the materials may be edited and published in POLYHEDRON Newszine or used in RPGA™ Network sanctioned tournaments, conventions, and events without cost to the Publisher. All other publication rights may be reserved by the author except that, upon publication, the Publisher is granted a first right of refusal to purchase any and all such publication rights offered for sale by the author. Solely for purposes of submissions for publication in POLYHEDRON Newszine and upon prior written agreement, authors may be granted a non-exclusive right to use TSR copyrighted material with proper acknowledgement; however, any use of such copyrighted material in the submission beyond the newszine without TSR's further prior written approval is prohibited.

In the event an article submitted for publication in POLYHEDRON Newszine contains material copyrighted by TSR, Inc., to such an extent as to make it impractical to separate those materials from the submission, TSR will retain copyright ownership of the article upon submission for publication.

However, if TSR makes use of the materials contained in the article for any product or commercial purpose beyond RPGA™ Network use, TSR will pay the author the then current fee for such product or purpose.

All letters addressed to the RPGA Network or to TSR, Inc., will be considered as submissions and may be printed in whole or in part at the discretion of the editor unless the sender specifically requests otherwise in writing.

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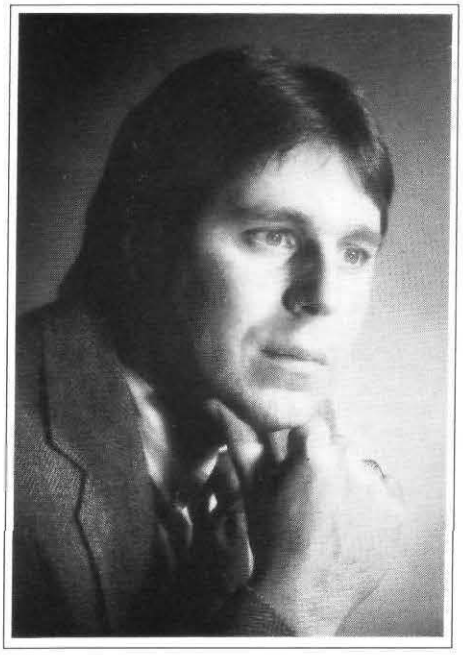
Bookwyrms

An Interview With R.A. Salvatore



by J. Eric Severson

R.A. Salvatore, author of several FORGOTTEN REALMS™ novels, is an avid player of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game who has come to realize that writing is his first love.

Salvatore lives in Massachusetts with his wife, Diane, their three children, Bryan, Geno, and Caitlin, their dog, Puddles, and the newest member of the family, a cat named Guenhwyvar. Salvatore finds leisure time hard to come by these days, as he works on the *Dark Elf Trilogy* with TSR, Inc. and another fantasy series with New American Library. His *Icewind Dale Trilogy*, including novels *The Crystal Shard, Streams of Silver*, and *The Halfling's Gem*, has hit bookstore bestseller lists nationwide.

Recently, Salvatore spoke with POLYHEDRON™ Newszine about how role-playing games and other aspects of his life have affected his writing.

What books do you like to read?

I like to read fantasy books. Right now I'm reading the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels, trying to keep up with them. It's nice to know what's going on in the world that I'm writing in. I don't have the time to read all that much anymore. I was reading the Mary Stewart series (*The Crystal Cave, The Hollow Hills*), the Arthurian legends. I put that down when I got the contract for *The Crystal Shard*, and I haven't picked it up since.

Do you play out the battles in your books?

No. I keep the AD&D® game separate—battles and characters. I get asked that question a lot. Did the characters or the stories or the battles come from the game? The answer is absolutely not. Writing is separate and private. The AD&D game is my escape time. I'm not working—as a writer or anything else—when I'm playing the game. Sometimes I will use larger-scale battles in the AD&D game just to take a look at tactics and how an ambush or a flanking maneuver might work. It is kind of a learning experience that I will bring to my writing if a similar scenario pops up in a book, but I don't purposely sit down playing the game with anything in mind towards going into my books.

Who is your personal favorite character?

Drizzt (the drow elf hero of *The Icewind Dale Trilogy*). With Drizzt I can draw very clear lines between good and evil and put forth my belief that a hero has got to be more than someone who can wield a sword. I think you see it in a lot of popular movies today, where the hero probably has one redeeming quality—that he can tuck a machine gun under his arm or wield a sword. I think a hero has to have more than that. He has to have principles and a clear definition in his own mind of what is right and wrong—a clear code of honor. I think Drizzt has that, and he doesn't stray from the line very often. But he's given up so much; he's the suffering hero as well. He gave up so much to get into the position he's in. As we're going to find out in the *Dark Elf Trilogy*, he could have had it a lot easier if he wasn't so dedicated to his principles.

Why do you like role-playing?

Role-playing is a nice way to get out of the real world, and I think that's why a lot of people do a lot of things. People read books, fiction books, to get away from the real world. People watch television or movies to get away from the real world. We all have our escapist needs. I don't think "escapism" is such a bad word. Role-playing is a fun way to do it, in a nice social setting with friends. Being able to live out your daydreams or your fantasies, and come up against some hideous monster without getting your arm really chopped off. It's kind of fun, but, mostly, I use it as an escapist vehicle. I use my writing that way, too, and I'm sure people use reading that way as well.

What is it about your writing that you are most proud?

I would say it was when *Streams of Silver* came out and did so well, and so many people are apparently waiting for *The Halfling's Gem*. That tells me that, so far, I'm giving the readers what they want. When *Streams of Silver* first came out, it debuted on the bestseller lists. That told me right away that people have liked *The Crystal Shard*, and that was a good feeling. Especially at some of the conventions, I like meeting the AD&D game players, or other people who've read the books, who get really excited about a character or about an event and who pick up on some of the things in the novels that I might have forgotten. The fact that people can relate that well to what I'm writing and bring it to their own fantasies makes me feel good about what I'm doing.

What literary areas do you hope to expand in?

Well, I hope to do children's stories, because I don't think there could ever be too many good children's books out there, and I think I could write a good one. As a writer, one of the things I hope to be able to continue to do, and to do better in the future, is put social com-

mentary in my writing. I like to make a book mean more, at least have some messages about right and wrong.

I'd also like to try some horror. I'm thinking of doing a fantasy novel that is kind of a cross between fantasy and horror—that would be a fantasy hero against a vampire.

What have you liked most about writing?

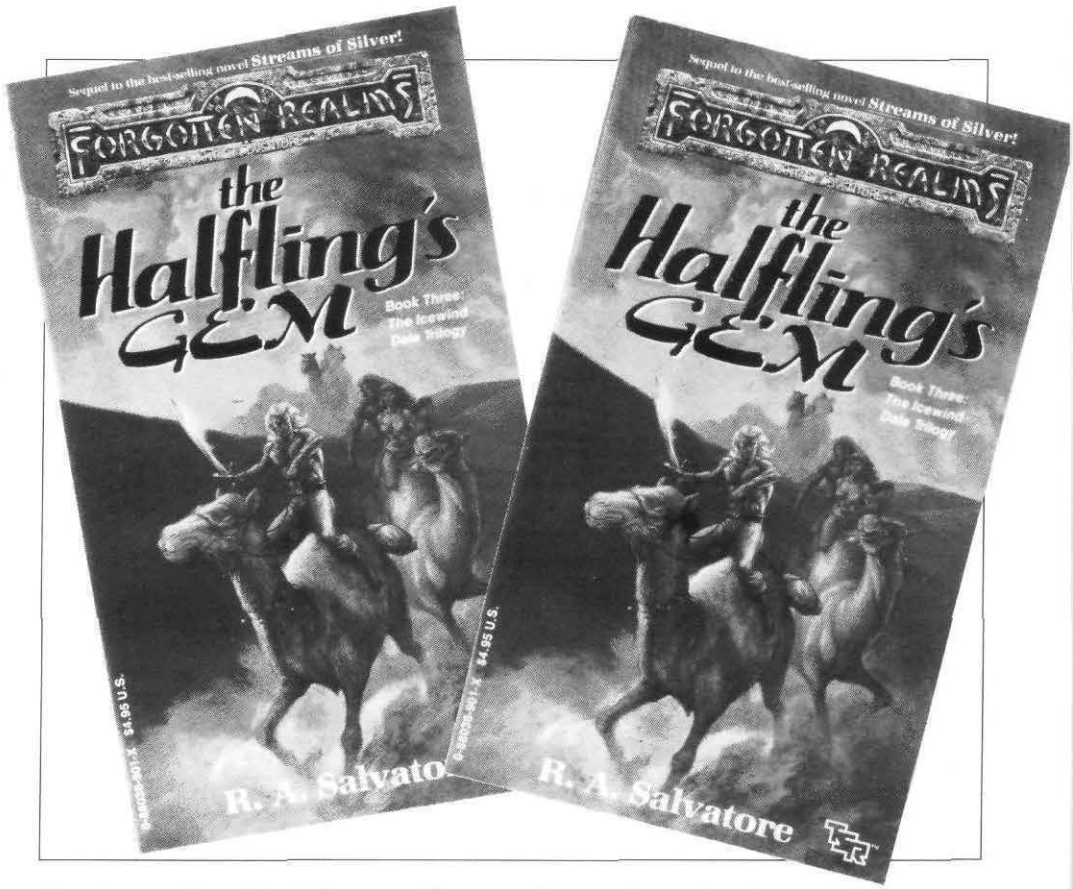
I like that it gives me the opportunity to do something I feel I have a talent for doing. It allows me to work when I'm in the mood to work, instead of on someone else's timeclock. And it allows me to say a lot of the things I feel very strongly about—the way people treat people or the way people *should* treat people. I think that when I'm writing I can play out my frustrations. I can put my own highs and lows into a more solid format. That's almost like self-therapy at times. Being able to do all that and make a career out of it is very special, being able to do something you love and you get so much fulfillment out of. Being able to support yourself doing that is a pretty rare thing these days.

How did your childhood fantasies influence your writing?

They didn't. I wasn't really into the sword and sorcery fantasy at all until college, though before that there was the conquering hero daydream I think everybody has. With me, it was always my friends and I in our clubhouse or whatever, when the world gets invaded by aliens or monsters or something that threatens the community, and here we are fighting a "Red Dawn" type of campaign against the invaders. But it was always against a monster or aliens. It wasn't against other people. I never was comfortable with people fighting other people.

When you're not writing, what do you do for fun?

Well, before I hurt my back, I was active in sports. I played street hockey and softball and used to be an avid weightlifter. Now I'm coaching; my sons are playing in the Chipmunk League in street hockey. Other than sports, we like to take walks around the reservoir that's down near our house. I love to go hiking, just going out for rides down the Mohawk Trail or out on the beach for a day—nice, relaxing times. I guess I'm getting old.


Sequel to the best-selling novel Streams of Silver!
FORGOTTEN REALMS
the Halfling's GEM
Book Three: The Icewind Dale Trilogy
R. A. Salvatore
$4.95 U.S.

How have other things in your life influenced your writing?

I think my father influenced my writing a lot. He had a very strong sense of morals, what was right and what was wrong, and he passed that down to me. I think my general dissatisfaction with the world around me plays a large part in my being a fantasy writer, where I can make the rules a little bit more and define the society a little bit more. Because I have a real problem with a lot of the things I see: blatant disregard for nature is a big one; the excessive greed, you know, when is enough enough? Billionaires doing these leveraged buyouts just for the sake of becoming multibillionaires, meanwhile putting hundreds of people out of work. I have some very strong feelings about racism and about sexism and about religious seclusion, one group thinking they're right and everybody else is wrong. And just about the way I see people treating other people. I think all those experiences, watching that day to day, has lit some fires in me, and writing is a good way to get my feelings out on some of those issues.

If one of your books were to be made into a movie, which one would you want it to be?

The book I've got coming out from New American Library next September, or it would probably be *The Halfling's Gem*, coming out from TSR in January. *The Halfling's Gem* would be exciting, and I think it would have some great visual effects.

What books of yours will be published in the next year and by whom?

The Halfling's Gem, *Homeland*, and *Exile* by TSR, and *Echoes of the Fourth Magic* by New American Library, with an unnamed sequel to follow.

❑

No Dice!

A Paranoia Game Adventure for any group of loyal red-level troubleshooters.

Illustration by James Holloway

by Don and Rich Bingle

Game Master's Background

The adventure begins when the troubleshooters are sent on a simple, routine mission; the elimination of a small secret society. The secret society, The Gamers, is a recent splinter group from the Trekkies. The Gamers' chief activities are pretending to be someone other than themselves and analyzing and recreating tactical and strategic battle situations. This presents a direct threat to The Computer, which is convinced that the weak and disorganized Gamers are mere pawns of more powerful and more sinister forces. Such an organization easily could be a secret training ground for Commie Mutant Traitor Spies with considerable espionage and sabotage skills. The Gamers—of course—must be stopped.

The mission is quite simple. The troubleshooters are directed to RGP Sector to raid the quarters of Mont-Y-HAL-6. After a short transbot ride, they surprise Mont-Y-HAL and a group of six Infrared level scum, who are are playing a bizarre game. They can easily defeat and capture the group, which fights to the death using knives and strange multi-sided balls. The traitors have, in addition to the strange balls, a variety of unusual papers and devices. Among the devices is a small, metal, rectangular device with no knobs, openings, or markings except the initials *G.U.P.P.I. II.* In fact, this is a Generic Universal Personality Programmer & Intermixer Model II, the ultimate role-playing game aide. The "guppy," as it is affectionately known, is an electronic device that will, when properly activated, instill a person or persons with a particular personality of fact or fiction. The change is temporary unless additional steps are taken to make the change permanent or unless the process is repeated too often. The guppy also has the additional side effect of giving the user a moderate tan, weight loss, and improved body tone.

The guppy is an experimental device from the days immediately before the commotion which ended the old reckoning. When the troubleshooters return from their mission with the device, they will be rewarded for their good work by being assigned the noble and glorious task of testing this strange and unknown device. If the troubleshooters

return without the device, or steal or destroy it, an identical second device is quickly found and presented to The Computer by a diligent scrub 'bot cleaning up after the mayhem.

The troubleshooters are assigned to assist Roy-G-BIV-1 with the task of discovering the nature and proper use of the guppy. In fact Roy-G-BIV knows something of the device from his research into old reckoning devices and has informed The Computer that he believes the guppy is an appetite depressant or metabolism regulator that could be useful in helping to regulate food supply in Alpha Complex. Roy-G-BIV really knows more, including the guppy's general concept and its real function as a personality programming and intermixing device. Roy-G-BIV, being the ultimate egoist (he believes he is all things to all Citizens), wants to learn to use the device to propagate his personality as the only personality in all of Alpha Complex.

At the lab, the troubleshooters are told to remove all their equipment (down to skivvies) and to enter a special room for treatment. Once inside, Roy-G-BIV conducts a preliminary, low-level experiment, then remembers that he wanted to keep one troubleshooter aside as a control because of the probable lethal nature of a full treatment. He tells the troubleshooters this and asks one of the PCs to come out.

After the various troubleshooters pretend to be the reprieved character for awhile (to save their skins), the experiments progress for some time. Roy-G-BIV becomes disappointed with the results (not realizing that the personalities of the six troubleshooters are shifting about from one to another) and sends the troubleshooters back to the barracks with one another's personalities. The personality switches wear off during the course of the next 20 hours at different rates, leaving the troubleshooters in some confusion. It will be useful to have each player jot down a few notes on his character's personality and history before play begins. Keeping these notes on index cards will make the scenes where personality switches occur much easier to play.

The troubleshooters are sent off the next daycycle to deal with another enclave of the pesky Gamers. Their personality difficulties complicate the easy task of capturing Jen-R-PGA and Skip-R-PGA, ringleaders of the Gamers, who claim to be sent by Heralds of the Teaser to investigate the future by interplaner travel to find out the future of gaming and beat the clone brothers of Pa-R-KER-1 to it.

While the troubleshooters struggle with their altered personalities and pursue the Gamers, Roy-G-BIV continues to fool with the guppy back at the lab; he eventually sets it on high dose, area effect, leaving a screeching metal rectangle that begins slowly, but surely, to cause everyone within an inexorably expanding radius about it to take on the personality of Roy-G-BIV. Not surprisingly, The Computer notes the disturbances from a growing area in the heart of Alpha Complex and finds the multiple and contradictory reports it is receiving from a plethora of Citizens claiming to be Roy-G-BIV to be most troubling. The troubleshooters are called (interrupted in their task of routing out the Gamers) and sent posthaste to investigate the area surrounding Roy-G-BIV's laboratories. On their way they meet a variety of Citizens, all claiming to be Roy-G-BIV. The only way to restore the situation is to quickly find and turn off the guppy. The trick is to do this before they succumb to the guppy's power and turn into Roy-G-BIV personalities themselves.

Players' Background

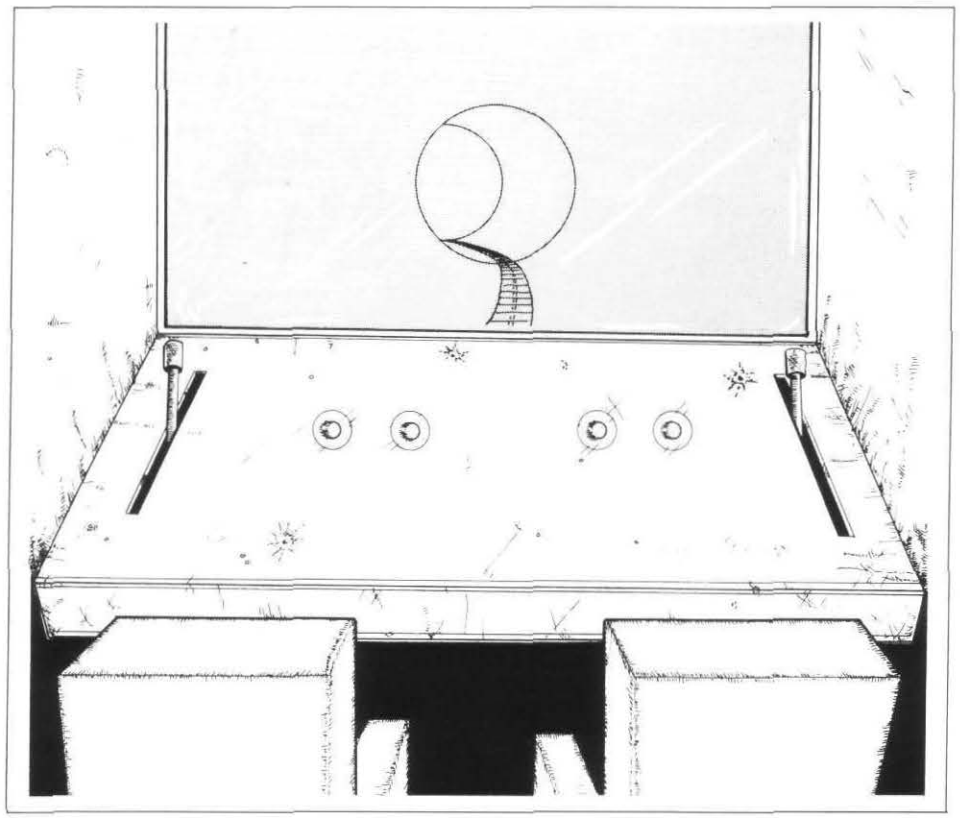
Ah! A successful mission at last, and not even a single shot fired, except Bomb-R-MAD's napalming of three scrub 'bots, of course. Those pesky members of the Surf Bums Secret Society will think twice about converting another reactor cooling system into a water slide, that's for sure. Gnarly, indeed, whatever that means. You've turned them over to interrogation safely, earned a fifty credit bonus, your first, and received your standard supplies. You are looking forward to a pleasant nightcycle surrounded by the multifaceted pleasures of the Tri-Dee screen, when suddenly the mission briefing alarm in your barracks begins to buzz most annoyingly. It reads: "Report to TSH-80 at once with all necessary gear for a mission to free Alpha Complex of Commie Mutant Traitor Scum of all shapes and sizes. Remember, The Computer is an equal opportunity executioner."

Scene 1: The Color of the Plebes

Having geared up in your Red Reflec Armor, your Red helmets, your Red coveralls, and your Red boots (with Red stockings), you check your Red laser pistol barrels and head down the Red corridors. Being a troubleshooter isn't easy, but then being an Infrared scum is even less pleasant, though often of less duration. Better Red than dead. As you approach TSH-80, the door hisses open to reveal a small, rectangular room. You see before you a long table with seven chairs. Seated in a chair at the far end of the table, six feet from the nearest side chair, is a troubleshooter dressed in a green jump suit, with Green reflec armor and laser rifle (14 to hit). He is also carrying a sling shot (16 to hit) and wearing a bandolier filled with slugs and pellets (10 metal slugs, two tear gas slugs, and one vomit gas slug). He looks up as you enter and smiles warmly and earnestly (smile broadly and innocently). "Hey, gee guys, c'mon in. I've been waiting for you. Sit down or be turned into radioactive slag."

If the PCs sit, continue. If not, let them fight with the Green troubleshooter, who will fire once, then hit a hidden button under the table which causes the floor in the entire half of the room toward the door to drop open into a vat of luminescent green liquid four feet deep. The liquid causes any laser weapon touching it to malfunction, burning through armor and panicked Citizens and causing death in 1d20 seconds. If the troubleshooters don't fight and don't sit, the Green troubleshooter says "There's gonna be trouble;" then hits the button after counting aloud to eleven. Bring in the clones and sit them down.

"My name's Ohh-G-BEV-1." He shuffles through some printouts in front of him on the table. "Your help is requested in ridding Alpha Complex of a new and sinister secret society, which of course is the only kind of secret society there is if you think about it, which of course you shouldn't, 'cause that would be treason and I'd have to vaporize you. Known only as The Gamers, they are known to consist mostly of Infrared workers who are stupidly dissatisfied



with the wonders and benefi . . . benefic . . . good stuff bestowed upon them by The Computer, who's pretty neat when you come to think about it, which you should, doncha think?" (Ohh-G-BEV pauses to let everyone think of how neat The Computer is.) "Anyways, these Gamers go around pretending to be what they aren't, exceptin' of course that they don't pretend not to be Gamers, unless of course they're caught, in which case they pretend not to be Gamers, which doesn't work 'cause they're mostly dead by then. So The Computer, who's awful pretty smart when you think about it, which of course you should," (Ohh-G-BEV pauses to let everyone think about how smart The Computer is.) "Wants to massacre them. Anyways, Wall-Y-BRO-3 says he heard a bunch of them Gamers pretending not to be themselves in the quarters next to his, where lives a guy by the name of Mont-Y-HAL-6. Being the kinda guy he is, which of course he is, 'cause he isn't pretending to be the kinda guy he isn't like them nasty Gamers and Commie Mutant Traitor Spies, he ratted, er, reported to The Computer.

All you have to do is go to Mont-Y-HAL's quarters, Room 2020 in RGP Sector, and bring 'em in. Any questions?"

If the PCs ask any questions, Ohh-G-BEV will ask their security clearance, then say "Well, if I were you, which I'm not, 'cause I'm me and not pretending to be anybody else at all, I wouldn't ask that question 'cause I wouldn't have the right security clearance and that information would be unavailable at this time, meaning that I probably would be revealing that I knew something that I wasn't supposed to just by asking those questions, in which case I could wake up dead, or not wake up dead, which is kinda the same thing, if you think about it." (Ohh-G-BEV hesitates slightly to see if anyone starts thinking about it and blasts them with his laser rifle if they do) "Which of course you shouldn't, 'cause that would be treasonous and get you dead real quick, in which case I guess you could think about it if you could, which you couldn't if you know what I mean, if you do, which you don't, unless you're a Gamer pretendin' to be dead." Other questions should be answered in a similarly rambling and worthless fashion until the PCs get bored and move on to their mission.

As you exit the mission briefing room, you see a shiny new subcompact transbot idling in the hallway. The door is open, and a cooing, over-sweet voice is repeatedly saying: "Non-stop service to RPG Sector now boarding. Non-stop service to RPG Sector now boarding. Non-stop service to RPG Sector now boarding." (You get the picture.) The voice appears to be coming from a small speaker grill above the open door.

The RPG Sector is, of course, not where the PCs want to go. They want to go to RGP Sector. If the PCs nevertheless get in, have them whisked off to a remote sector of Alpha Complex which looks like it has been repeatedly tac-nuked, which of course it has. Let the PCs wander aimlessly through the lethally radioactive slag until they find a working terminal for The Computer, where they learn that they have been fined 50 credits and are suspected of treason for not reporting as ordered to RGP Sector. A successful *Electronic Engineering* or *Transbot Op. & Maint.* skill check will get the waiting transbot to reprogram for RGP Sector; in this case you can pick up the next scene as if the PCs never messed up in the first place.

If the PCs do not fall for the misdirection, they may either try to reprogram the transbot, as above, or wait patiently for a moment, at which time another similar transbot arrives, this one cooing: "Non-stop service for RGP Sector now boarding. Non-stop service for RGP Sector now boarding. Non-stop service for RGP Sector now boarding." (You still get the picture.)

As you enter the vehicle, you find six very small bucket seats. In front of one of the seats there are several buttons, knobs, and levers.

If everyone enters, read the next boxed section. Otherwise, let the PCs walk uneventfully to RGP Sector, but tell them to take one point off all their skills until further notice (the loss is due to fatigue and rest will restore the lost points).

The door swings shut and locks with an audible click as the transbot smoothly pulls away from TSH-80 and out into the corridors toward RGP Sector. There are four buttons: red, blue, yellow, and green along the top of the dash, a slot under the yellow button, a lever to the left, and a lever to the right.

If anyone asks and makes a successful *Transbot Op. & Maint.* skill check, let the troubleshooter know secretly what the buttons and levers do. Otherwise, the PCs can find out only by trial and error, if they are curious enough to try them—they need only sit tight to get safely and comfortably to where they are going.

Red button: The temperature inside the transbot begins to rise and soon becomes uncomfortable. The temperature will stabilize at 110 degrees Fahrenheit, with the only ill effects being sweat, minor burns from touching metal surfaces, and an endurance check. Any troubleshooter who rolls above his endurance attribute on 1d20 passes out after five minutes of exposure to the heat.

Blue button: The temperature inside the transbot begins to drop and soon becomes uncomfortable. The temperature will stabilize at 10 degrees Fahrenheit, with no ill effects other than chattering teeth and exposed skin freezing to metal objects. Note that once either the red or blue button has been pushed, it will be very difficult to keep the temperature in a comfortable range as it takes less than a minute to go from one extreme to the other.

Yellow button: If the transbot is in motion, it stops and says: "Please insert your manual override key in the slot at this time." The PCs do not have such a key.

Green button: If the transbot has been stopped (see yellow button), it immediately switches back to autopilot mode and continues toward its destination. If the transbot already is moving, nothing happens.

Left lever: The transbot starts rolling counterclockwise, ever faster, with resulting bruises and G-force headaches. Without a successful *Transbot Op. and Maint.* roll at -5, this motion will not stop until it reaches its destination.

Right lever: The transbot starts tumbling end over end forward, with resulting chaos and stuns for any PC who does not roll under his endurance attribute on 1d20. This motion stops after five minutes.

As the PCs fiddle with the controls, stress the discomfort level and let the PCs complain and fight amongst themselves for a few minutes. When you and they have suffered enough, continue.

The transbot suddenly slows to a halt and the door pops open, letting in comforting 72 degree filtered air. You can see a sign on the wall that reads "RGP Sector, Room 2020."

Scene 2: It Could be Nicer Being Yellow or Orange or Some Other Color

A small handwritten note on the door to room 2020 reads: "All games have been moved to DND Sector. Moll-Y-NRO-3." This is a very simple ruse. Nothing has been moved and there are Gamers inside Room 2020. If the PCs go off to DND Sector, have them get blasted to death by a guy wearing a white wizard's outfit and armed with an Ultraviolet laser cannon (16 to hit, three shots per round), then send the clones back here to Room 2020 (start the scene with their arrival). The clones automatically hear some noise inside the room.

Room 2020 is about 30 feet square, with a large table in the center rear, a bed near the door, and shelves and shelves on either side. The shelves are crammed with boxes, books, and equipment, including cloth and stuffed creatures of improbable existence. Mont-Y-HAL stands at one end of the table, with a notebook and several small multi-faceted colored balls or pebbles of some kind. Six Infrared workers sit, three on either side, at the opposite end of the table. As you enter, one says "I take my green laser rifle and blast the Violet Vulture Squadron trooper away." He rolls some of the colored pebbles. "A hit! Take that, slime breath. Death to the Computer!" An Infrared across the table turns to the first and says, in a falsetto voice: "You violent brute! Now we shall never find the ancient artifacts. The Computer may not be my friend, but I think that you are not my friend either. Hmmmphh!"

If total mayhem has not yet broken out, Mont-Y-HAL looks up and sees the troubleshooters, then calmly turns to his Infrareds and says: "Save versus death. Red level troubleshooters.

Amidst cries of "Roll against what?" and "We can handle them," Mont-Y-HAL dives for the end of the bed, under where he has hidden his Yellow laser rifle (10 to hit). The Infrareds begin to notice what is happening amidst cries of "No physical acting out!" and "I disbelieve!" They fumble for knives (3 to hit) or throw the colored pebbles (3 to hit, damage column 1). This shouldn't be much of a fight. Try not to drag it out, although all NPCs will fight to the death. If any are captured, they admit they are Gamers, playing a game called "Personal Computing" and a nodule (or is that module?) called *I Compute, Therefore I am Boss.* They admit, if asked, that the note is a ruse and that there is nothing going on in DND Sector. The PCs can go through the books and games, including such titles as *Sewers and Ditches, Stop Secrets, Twilight Zone 2000, Shoe Hill,* and *Ruinquest.* They will find hundreds of the strangely shaped pebbles (dice of various descriptions) and a small, rectangular box marked *G.U.P.P.I. II.* It has no buttons or other features. If questioned about the rectangular box, any captured Gamers say only that it is an invaluable game aide. Let the PCs head back to TSH-80 for debriefing or prod them with a status request over their headsets.

Scene 3: The Days of Whines and Poses

Ohh-G-BEV is waiting for the PCs when they arrive back at TSH-80: "Gosh, you guys really did a good job when you think about it or even if you don't. Did'ja find any neat stuff?" He insists on looking over all the stuff they found and will push if they claim not to have found anything. If they give him the guppy, continue the scene. If they destroyed the guppy or failed to find it, Ohh-G-BEV produces another guppy and says, "Gee, look at what one of the scrub 'bots found in a secret compartment in the room."

"You guys musta done pretty good," the Green troubleshooter speculates. " 'Cause The Computer is rewarding you by letting you help Roy-G-BIV-1 figure out what this guppy thing does. He says he thinks it's some kind of appetite depressant or something. All those Gamer guys are pretty trim and fit, you know. Anyways, his lab is in Room 360, EBM Sector. Deliver the device to him. You are assigned to Roy-G-BIV until further notice. Any questions?"

All questions will be answered in rambling nonsensical discourse, as before.

The door to EBM-360 slides open as you approach. Inside you see a cluttered office. Printouts are scattered all over large tables. The filing cabinets against the side walls are overflowing with papers. There is another door in the far wall. At one of the tables sits a Green troubleshooter, who appears to be engrossed in examining one of the printouts at the closest table.

Unless physical force is used, Roy-G-BIV ignores the troubleshooters for 30 seconds or so, as he finishes what he is doing. If interrupted, he scowls and asks them what they think they're doing, in a disdainful and snooty voice: "Yes, what is it? Can't you see that I'm busy? What do you want? What is your security clearance?" If the troubleshooters identify themselves, or say they were sent by Ohh-G-BEV, or say that they have the guppy, Roy-G-BIV introduces himself and explains his research to them, as described below. He uses a haughty, superior tone of voice when describing his work. If the PCs do not identify themselves, he summons a guardbot (neurowhip, 16 to hit) to come dispose of his unwanted guests (one of many buttons under the table's lip summons the robot.)

"My name is Roy-G-BIV, but you may call me sir. You will follow my instructions to the letter, with no questions asked. I cannot afford to have The Computer's vital work hampered by insolent troubleshooters. Now, then, give me the guppy."

If the PCs refuse, Roy-G-BIV, warns them once, then calls the guardbot. After all, Red Level troubleshooters are expendable, as will be aptly demonstrated again below. Once he has the device and all troubling or shooting troubleshooters have been dealt with and clone replenishments have occurred, Roy-G-BIV begins his explanation:

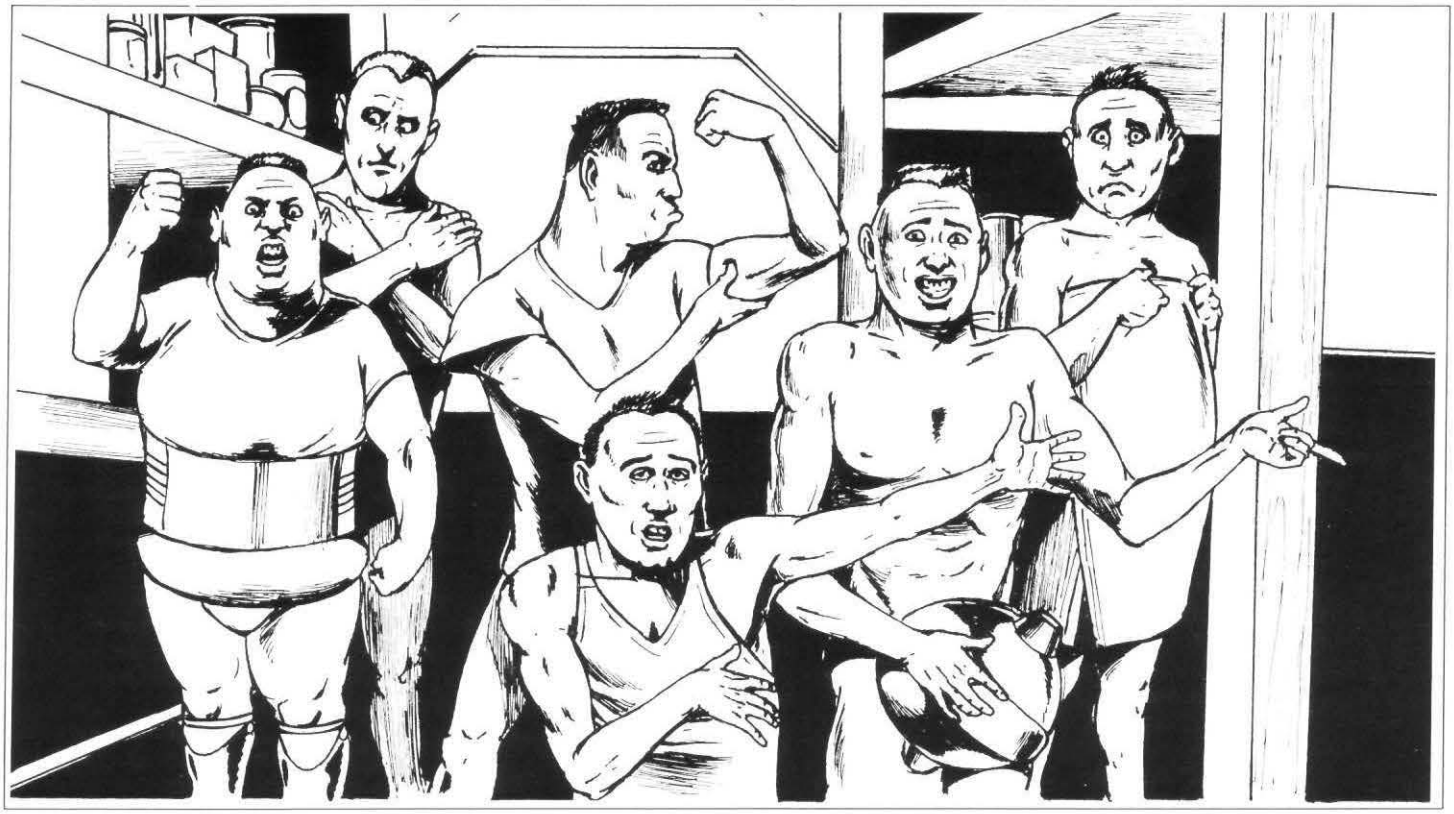
"Careful digging into research records from the era of the Old Reckoning and the data files of The Computer has revealed the indisputable fact that the G.U.P.P.I. II, or "guppy," as it is known, produces sonic vibrations that cause those within range to undergo a change in the metabolic rate. This change causes the individual to have a lesser appetite and therefore to eat less, while maintaining an even energy level. The effect lasts only one daycycle, so treatments would be required once each daycycle, unless the additional extender treatments mentioned in the research are effective. This technology would allow The Computer to use some of the Citizens now engaged in food production to engage in more useful endeavors, such as the production and stockpiling of even greater levels of weaponry of mass destructive capability and the production of additional Tri-Dee programs. Unfortunately, the guppy was lost to Alpha Complex thousands of daycycles ago. Through the great efforts of The Computer, it has been found. Now, if you will all follow me into the lab."

Roy-G-BIV leads the PCs to the door in the back of the room. The door opens into a short hallway with a door on the left-hand wall and a heavy lead or steel shielding door at the far end. Keeping a tight grip on his laser rifle, Roy-G-BIV motions the PCs toward the shielding door at the far end, which is, of course, the west end. "Please remove your jumpsuits and other belongings and hang them on the hooks near the far door, then enter the room behind the door," he asks. When everyone has complied with his request, Roy-G-BIV enters the left-hand door, which leads to the control room overlooking the laboratory room the PCs have just entered.

As the lead shielding door locks behind you with a resounding clang and rattle, you enter the laboratory and see six reclining chairs arranged in a circle in the middle of the large room. The room is otherwise empty, though you notice drains in the floor and a large number of lights and fixtures in the ceiling 25 feet above your head. A large viewing window dominates the upper half of the left-hand wall and you can see Roy-G-BIV working at some control panels in the viewing room behind the window.

Stepping to a microphone, he says, "Now if you would please make yourself comfortable on the reclining chairs. Please lie back on the chairs and clear your minds completely, which should not be terribly difficult. In a few minutes, we will begin the experiment." Roy-G-BIV's voice seems to come from everywhere, yet nowhere, permeating your mind. The lights in the room seem to be getting dimmer and dimmer, but it is happening so slowly that you aren't sure whether the lights are getting dimmer or it is just your imagination. Just as you are beginning to feel a bit drowsy, your ears are assailed by an intensely loud and high shriek. (If any PC is using *Hypersenses* when this occurs, the character is stunned for one round and loses his hearing for 1d20 minutes, which could put him at a serious disadvantage as the scene below unfolds.) The lights in the room dim quite noticeably this time. Before you can react, the noise is replaced just as abruptly with the smug voice of Roy-G-BIV. "The initial phase of the treatment is completed." (Pause.) "Is anyone hungry?" (The PCs do not feel particularly hungry, but let them lie if they want to. Roy-G-BIV will say "Hmmmm", look serious, and make a notation on a printout if any PCs claim to be hungry.) "Is anyone tired?" (Unless the PCs walked to RGP Sector, they are not particularly tired, but run this as the previous question.)

"In the next phase of the treatment, you will be exposed to a series of highly concentrated light rays above the infrared range."



Yes, this means concentrated laser fire from the "Lights" above in the visible light range through Ultraviolet. And, yes, this means the PCs are at considerable risk. Yes, a successful *Habitat Engineering* or *Electrical Engineering* skill check will reveal to an inquiring PC that the "lights" look like laser cannons.

"Research available to me from The Computer has suggested that this process is needed to set or 'burn-in' the desired effects of the guppy." (This burn-in phase is not actually necessary to the operation of the guppy; Roy-G-BIV has been misled by incomplete records and the "tanning" side effect of the guppy.) Unfortunately, research available to me has also suggested that approximately 80%, or four out of five, of the subjects treated cannot withstand these beams. While this accomplishes the desired appetite depressant effect, the energy level maintenance feature is lost as deceased Citizens tend to be nonproductive, although docile and easy to handle. Because of the high mortality rate, it is hoped that we can determine that this next phase can be eliminated or replaced, at least for Higher Security Levels. To that end, one of you will not undergo the next phase in order to act as a "control" for determining if the burn is actually necessary. The troubleshooter who will be this control is . . .

If there is a deafened PC, Roy-G-BIV selects that PC as the control, otherwise choose the control character randomly. Unfortunately, Roy-G-BIV hasn't been paying much attention to the PCs, and while he knows their names, he doesn't know which is which. "Let me see, Citizens look so much alike, and you are not wearing your nametags. Which one of you is (the control character)?"

Let each troubleshooter try to save his skin by attempting to convince Roy-G-BIV that he is the control by imitating the correct PC. If the control character is not deaf he might try to conceal his identity if he believes this is a trick to disadvantage him or deny him some benefit. Roy-G-BIV will not be surprised if more than one troubleshooter claims to be the control character, as he is aware of the true nature of the guppy and will surmise that it is affecting the troubleshooters' personalities, even though the dosage was actually far too low for any effect.

If only one character claims to be the control, fry the other five with laser fire and repeat the process with the clones. Odds are that the new set of clones will try to masquerade as the chosen character. After you have had enough impersonations, Roy-G-BIV speaks again.

"Never mind, we will skip that phase this time and try another approach." With that the lights dim again, the shriek wails even louder and longer, then suddenly stops.

Roy-G-BIV has tried another setting on the guppy. This one scrambles the PCs' personalities, switching them between characters, but Roy-G-BIV erroneously thinks it is really a dosage which will impose his (Roy-G-BIV's) personality on the troubleshooters. Take each player aside and hand him one of your spare PC descriptions, hand out the personalities randomly, but do not give a player the personality for his own character. Each character's attributes, equipment, and mutant power remains the same.

But each PC has completely changed personalities. Tell each player that his character now thinks that he is the PC whose personality description he has just been given and must act accordingly. Secretly roll 1d20 to determine how many hours each personality will last. Keep track, as personalities will be converting back for the next 20 game hours, which will cause some confusion and arguments, especially when two PCs claim to be the same person.

After the players have gotten acquainted with their "new" characters, Roy-G-BIV speaks: "Please state your name and tell me something about yourself." This will either lead to everyone claiming to be his new self without objection or arguments and mayhem as to who is who. Let the PCs play that out a few minutes, then have Roy-G-BIV speak again. "Obviously, the experiment is not working properly. You are released for rest and other duties for now." The door hisses open. The party's jumpsuits and equipment are in the hall where they left them. Let the PCs gather their equipment, or fight over who is who as they go to their barracks for the evening. If there are any deaths, 'bots will pick up the remains and The Computer sends back the clone of the actual Citizen killed, rather than the person who the PC thought he was at the time. This should produce more confusion and questions about why the slain character was wearing another Citizen's equipment, etc. Let the PCs role-play for a while, then it's time for them to take their *Sleepy-Time Pills* and go to bed for eight hours.

Scene 3A: Hearlds of the Teaser and the Future of Gaming

You awake the next morning to a beeping mission alert tone. It reads: "Gamers have been reported in Room 414, WIS Sector. Immediate action to capture or eliminate them must be taken at your earliest convenience, which better be now. Have a nice day and remember that The *Computer is your friend*."

The PCs can easily get to WIS sector via moving walkways. Remember that the PCs could be undergoing personality changes throughout this scene as time progresses.

Room 414 is a small room, cluttered with printouts, books, and gaming paraphernalia. It also has an old, outdated personal computer (not hooked up to The Computer, treason of the highest order). At the personal computer sits Skip-R-PGA, furiously typing away. He is intense, nervous, and somewhat unkempt. He wears Red coveralls and an inexpensive, yet indestructible digital watch. Standing over him is Jen-R-PGA, a svelte and well-tanned Citizen in Red coveralls. Jen-R-PGA is speaking " . . . but if you do an article, then we will be able to publish Issue 6004 on schedule." Skip-R-PGA responds: "Look, I've got to get these technical aspects of interplaner travel down before I forget them, so we can update Edition 526."

The two, if not already dead, then notice the PCs. "Ah, new Gamers" says Jen-R-PGA. "I'm not doing the paperwork," Skip-R-PGA responds. If questioned, the two will claim to be the leaders of the Gamer secret society, sent by the Heralds of the Teaser to investigate the future by interplaner travel, so as to find out the future of gaming and beat the clone brothers of Pa-R-KER to it. They have become trapped because of a glitch in the rules of interplaner travel and decided to do what they do best, organize Gamers and games. If questioned about the guppy, they reveal that it is a personality programming game aid sold by mail order in the olden days. It was extremely popular with some gamers because of its personality programming capability and with others because it caused weight loss, improved body tone, and gave one a healthy tan. In these discussions, Jen-R-PGA will be friendly and helpful, unless intimidated, in which case she will pout and become uncooperative. Skip-R-PGA will be distracted and tend to wander off into explanations of technical matters and obscure trivia. If the PCs reveal that they are not Gamers, the two will make a run for the door and try to lose themselves in a crowd of Citizens engaged in a group songfest. They have no weapons, but will bluff the troubleshooters by calling upon destructive magical powers to try to frighten and stop the PCs attempting to capture them. Suddenly, however, as this scene is occuring, the PCs hear the following over their headsets:

Scene 4: When Green is All There is To Be

"Emergency, emergency. Dangerous situation reported in EBM Sector. All, repeat, all personnel other than Roy-G-BIV-1 refuse to respond from an expanding area centered on Room 360, EBM Sector. Roy-G-BIV has, almost simultaneously, responded or reported from over 300 locations surrounding Room 360, EBM Sector. Commie Mutant Traitor Spy activity is suspected. Drop all, repeat, all current activities and investigate and correct situation developing currently in EBM Sector."

As you rush, with your equipment, toward a waiting transbot (same design as yesterdaycycle, see **Scene 1**) and head for EBM Sector, you note that you feel unusually energetic, fit, and trim. You are not hungry, not even for the Blue Mashies that are your favorite food.

The first portion of the trip is uneventful, except for any arguing, etc. the PCs are engaging in because of any continuing personality confusion, or because of PC experimentation with the transbot controls. Eventually, the transbot will round a corner and come to a crashing halt, sending all troubleshooters not correctly employing safety restraining harnesses to fly forward and stop abruptly as they hit the front windscreen or intervening PCs, as the case may be. The speed of this crash was 30 km/hour; roll on the *Vehicular Accidents and Falls from Great Heights Table* for each unrestrained PC and for each PC struck by an unrestrained PC.

The transbot door automatically opens to reveal, not EBM 360, but EBM 3090. For some strange reason, the transbot has not delivered you properly, much less smoothly, to your intended destination.

Those of you who are not stunned, incapacitated, dead, or vaporized almost immediately note that the transbot has crashed into a fairly large pile of smashed up transbots of various makes, models, and colors. All appear empty (because they are empty) and non-functional (because they are not functional). You note that busy scrub 'bots are carrying off the remains of former occupants.

The scrub bots also will cart away any incapacitated, dead, or vaporized PCs, and clones appear by a nearby pneumatic chute within a few short minutes. The pile of transbots almost completely blocks the corridor ahead, certainly sufficiently to wreck all approaching transbot traffic. There are two Yellow level troubleshooters wearing Reflec standing near the pile-up. Each is brandishing a Yellow laser pistol in one hand (13 to hit) and waving what appears to be a frag grenade in the other. As the PCs gather their wits, yet another transbot comes around the corner and crashes into the pile-up. The transbots are red, orange, and yellow. The corridor is red. The two Yellow Level troubleshooters are engrossed in the following conversation, which is carried on in haughty tones:

Ohh-Y-MII-4: "That will teach those insubordinate scum to listen when a Green level troubleshooter says to halt."
Idunno-Y-NOT-2: "That's right. Good thing I was here. Nobody gets by Roy-G-BIV."
Ohh-Y-MII-4: "Right, nobody gets by me."
Idunno-Y-NOT-2: "Whaddya mean YOU! I'm Roy-G-BIV. You're some scum Yellow troubleshooter by the name of Ohh-Y-MII."
Ohh-Y-MII-4: "You're crazed. I'm Roy-G-BIV. You're Idunno-Y-NOT. I'm me, you're not.
Idunno-Y-NOT-2: "No you're not me, you're MII. I'm not NOT. I'm Roy-G-BIV."
Ohh-Y-MII-4: "No you're NOT"
Idunno-Y-NOT-2: "No, I'm me."
Ohh-Y-MII-4: "You just said I was MII, but I'm Roy-G-BIV. You're NOT.
Idunno-Y-NOT-2: "No, I'm not."
Ohh-Y-MII-4: "Exactly."

With that, both open fire on one another. If the PCs should interrupt the conversation earlier, the two Yellow troubleshooters each respond that they are Roy-G-BIV and that a Yellow Citizen in the lead transbot failed to halt when ordered. This will provoke them to argue as above with one another as to who is who. Neither can explain his current garb.

As the PCs move toward EBM 360, they should meet a variety of Citizens, of various security clearances. All speak in superior and haughty tones and all claim to be Roy-G-BIV. All request assistance against any other "impostors" which are similarly claiming to be Roy-G-BIV. None will take kindly to refusals of assistance, but all will be easily placated by assurances that the PCs are going to handle the situation from Roy-G-BIV's lab in EBM 360.

In fact, the real Roy-G-BIV continued to experiment with the guppy, eventually setting it on high dose, area effect. It sits in a slot in the control room above the laboratory, shrieking hideously and causing everyone within an expanding area to believe that they are Roy-G-BIV. The real Roy-G-BIV has died due to the guppy's weight reduction side effects. Other false Roy-G-BIVs are beginning to suffer the same fate if they remain too near EBM 360. When the party is ready the enter the lab, have each PC roll 1d20. The roll represents the number of minutes (real time) remaining until the character's personality succumbs to the overloading guppy's effects and he adopts the overbearing, snobbish, superior, haughty, impatient and egotistical personality of Roy-G-BIV, who is a member of the Illuminati secret society and who believes he is all things to all people. The PCs will have to act quickly if they are to get into the control room and deactivate the guppy before succumbing to the personality change.

> An overwhelming screeching sound comes from the direction of EBM 360. When you arrive there, you find that EBM 360 looks like a bomb has hit it.

The "bomb" damage actually is sonic damage. Pass the following note to any PC who has succumbed to Roy-G-BIV's personality: "Look what they've done to your lab!" Let the PCs deal with the Roy-G-BIVs among them as they see fit. Clones arrive by pneumatic tube after being reported. Each new clone should roll 1d20 to determine how long before it, too, succumbs.

A search of the laboratory where the PCs reclined yesterdaycycle reveals nothing, but the screeching comes from everywhere and nowhere all at once. If the PCs go up to the control room, they find the inert, shriveled, and extremely tan body of Roy-G-BIV. In a slot in the control panel is the shrieking G.U.P.P.I. II. There are buttons above and below the slot. The device can be turned off by pressing the button immediately beneath the slot and removing the device. Pressing other buttons will increase or decrease the volume of shrieking and fire the laser cannon in the laboratory below, vaporizing the reclining chairs. One minute after the shrieking ceases, The Computer contacts the PCs for a situation report. If the PCs try to steal the guppy, the computer immediately marks them for execution, concluding that they were behind the demise of Roy-G-BIV and the destruction in the sector. If they report "mission accomplished, take them through a debriefing session. Feel free to assign any reward or penalty you think is justified. Rewards can include anything up to and including a 50-credit bonus (or maybe a promotion). Penalties should not be more severe than a temporary assignment to a vat cleaning detail. ❑

Riding Rules

An Aid For The Rolemaster Game

	ADULT						PRIMARY ATT.				SECONDARY ATT.				TERTIARY ATT.			
Type	Sz	Hits	AT(DB)	MS	AQ	LVL	TY	MAX	ADD	PROB	TY	MAX	ADD	PROB	TY	MAX	ADD	PROB
farm (chg)	L	125	3(20)	MF	MF	2	Ba	L	30	100	TS	L	20	—	—	—	—	—
farm (rear)							K	M	30	70	TS	L	25	X	B	M	20	30
riding (chg)	L	100	3(30)	F	F	3	Ba	L	25	100	TS	L	15	—	—	—	—	—
riding (rear)							K	M	25	70	TS	L	20	X	B	M	15	30
war (chg)	L	150	3(10)	M	F	5	Ba	L	50	100	TS	L	35	—	—	—	—	—
war (rear)							K	M	50	70	TS	L	45	X	B	M	30	30

by Mark Trammell

Gandalf caressed him. "It is a long way from Rivendell, my friend," he said; "but you are wise and swift and come at need. Far let us ride now together, and part not in this world again!" from The Two Towers by J.R.R. Tolkien.

This is the esteem that warriors, wizards, nobles, and knights always have held for their steeds.

In the fantasy world of the Rolemaster game by Iron Crown Enterprises, horses serve as beasts of burden, status symbols, partners in combats, and trusted friends. However, rules concerning horses in combat do not cover many options. This addition should help fill that void. This system easily can be adapted to other fantasy role-playing games.

Statistics For Horses

Refer to the table; it is an expansion of the information provided in Iron Crown Enterprises' Claw Law supplement. All abbreviations match those used in the supplement.

Farm horses are any horses acting primarily as beasts of burden. This work includes pulling plows and wagons and carrying bags and cargo.

Riding horses are used by messengers and couriers. A riding horse's sole function is to transport people.

War horses include all those specially trained for combat. These are typically owned by warriors and nobles.

Daily Movement

An average horse laden with a rider in armor and carrying normal equipment can travel 25 miles a day. With a lesser burden, a horse can travel 30. All horses must periodically rest, and cannot travel the full amount without stopping to rest.

Riding at a good clip for one day, with a light rider, a horse can achieve a distance of 35 miles, but it will have to rest eight hours before traveling again.

Common Horseback Maneuvers

These are some of the more common maneuvers which are likely to be attempted by characters. Following each maneuver is a difficulty rating for use on the Movement/Maneuver table in Character Law.

Fighting With One Hand (LIGHT)

When attempting this, the character holds his weapon in his best hand, while holding the reins in the other. It is possible for the character also to employ a shield. The GM must determine the character's offensive bonus (OB); to do this, average the character's riding skill bonus with his normal OB to get the mounted OB. This could allow some characters to fight better mounted than on foot, evidencing an adeptness for mounted combat. It is a LIGHT maneuver to stay mounted while fighting.

Fighting With A Two-Handed Weapon (HARD)

It requires a great amount of skill to control a horse, stay in the saddle, and *fight with a two-handed weapon.* A character attempting to fight in this manner suffers a -25 penalty to his mounted OB (first, determine the OB for one-handed combat and then subtract 25). It is a HARD maneuver to stay in the saddle while fighting with a two-handed weapon.

Jumping Obstacles And Gaps (SPECIAL)

The difficulty of this maneuver depends on the height of the obstacle or the length of the gap. Obstacles can rank from EASY (1 foot high) to ABSURD (7 feet high). Gaps can rank from EASY 2 feet wide) to ABSURD (15 feet wide). Any results of extremely bad rolls apply to the rider, who is assumed to have fallen. Optionally, the result could apply to the horse, with the rider receiving the result listed on the next most difficult column. For example, Telmak, the victim of a horrible roll, has discovered that he has wiped out, along with his horse, while trying to jump a hedge; a HARD maneuver. After everything is totaled, the result of the roll comes to -145. This means the horse has broken a foreleg, is unconscious, and is stunned. To find out what happened to Telmak, look in the VERY HARD column to learn that he has a broken leg and also is unconscious.

Using A Horse As A Shield (HARD or VERY HARD)

A character accomplishes this maneuver by lowering himself to one side of the horse to protect himself. The number obtained on the maneuver chart is regarded as an addition to the character's defensive bonus; the addition cannot exceed 50. This maneuver only helps against attacks coming from the opposite side of the horse. Attackers on the side to which the character has lowered himself add 25 to their OB while attacking the character. The maneuver is considered HARD if the char-

acter is wearing leather armor or normal clothing; if the character is wearing chain or plate it is VERY HARD.

Riding At Full Gallop (MEDIUM)

It is a MEDIUM maneuver for a character to retain his balance while his horse is at a full gallop. Any result appearing as a positive number represents success.

Vaulting From A Moving Horse (VERY HARD or EXTREMELY HARD)

This maneuver involves jumping out of the saddle while the horse is still moving and landing on one's feet to the side of the horse. Any positive numbered result on the maneuver chart represents success, and is also the percentage of the round in which the character can act. This is a VERY HARD maneuver for characters in leather armor or clothing; an EXTREMELY HARD maneuver for those in chain or plate.

Vaulting Onto A Stationary Horse (MEDIUM or VERY HARD)

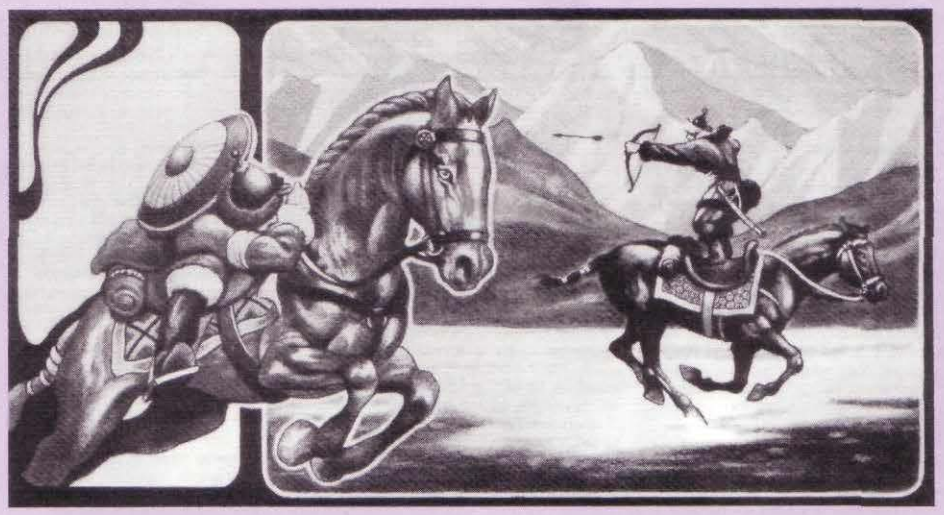
It usually takes a full round for a character to climb into the saddle. However, a character successfully accomplishing this maneuver can vault into the saddle and have the horse underway in one round. In leather armor or less, this is considered a MEDIUM maneuver; in chain or plate, it is considered VERY HARD. A positive number result means the character was successful, and the number represents the percentage of the mount's movement for that round.

Picking Up A Humanoid From Horseback (VERY HARD)

This consists of a rider reaching down from his horse while moving at a slow rate and picking up a willing passenger. The passenger is put on the horse in front or behind the rider. This is a VERY HARD maneuver, and as with the maneuver above, a positive number means success and shows the percentage of the horse's movement for that round.

Pulling A Foe From A Horse (HARD)

This consists of tackling a foe, forcing him out of his saddle, and falling with him to the ground. This is a HARD maneuver, and failure results in the character attempting the maneuver to fall—while the foe remains mounted. Success means that the foe and the character has fallen. However, a numerical roll above 100 means that the foe has fallen, but the character has not. If both fall, the foe takes a "B" crush critical, and the player character an "A" crush critical. Anyone who falls alone takes a "C" crush critical.



Tackling A Foe On The Ground (HARD)

With this, a character attempts to vault from his horse and land on a foe. This is a HARD maneuver. If the roll indicates failure, the PC has missed and takes "C" crush critical damage. Any numerical result on the chart means success, and the foe suffers "D" crush critical, while the character suffers "A" crush critical. The foe's defensive bonus applies to the roll.

Barding

A horse's hide provides it with an armor type (AT) of 3. Characters can purchase barding to give a horse better protection.

A riding horse can wear only leather barding; a farm horse leather or chain; and a war horse, any. Barding only can be purchased in large cities.

Type	AT	Riding	Farm	War	Cost	Prod. Time
leather	7	X	X	X	75 sp	2 mo.
chain	13	—	X	X	200 sp	4 mo.
plate	17	—	—	X	500 sp	6 mo.

Carrying Capacity

Farm horses. These horses are slow, but powerful. They can hold at most a rider in chain armor with light equipment; carrying more than than reduces their speed.

Riding horses. Such horses are built for speed and cannot comfortably handle more than a rider in light armor with light equipment. Carrying more than that hampers the horse's speed.

War horses. A war horse can retain its normal speed while carrying a rider in chain armor with shield and normal equipment. The most a war horse can carry is a rider in plate armor, shield, lance, and normal gear; however with this load the horse is slower.

Equipment

Here are several items that are not included in the equipment lists in Character Law by Iron Crown Enterprises.

Item	Cost	Prod. Time	Notes
saddle	10 sp	5 days	
bridle/ harness	1 bp	1 day	
saddlebags (2)	4 bp	2 days	80 lb. cap.
saddle blanket	4 cp	½ day	
feedbag	1 cp	½ day	
grain	5 cp	—	1 week
horseshoes (4)	6 bp	1 day	

The GM can adjust the costs of items to allow for scarcities in rural areas. Horseshoes must be changed regularly; this can be done by any character with a riding skill of level 1 or more. ❑

The Living Galaxy

Brainstorming The Universe

by Roger E. Moore

Your bags are stowed overhead, your seat belt is fastened, your jetliner is warming up before taxiing down the runway, and all you know about your final destination is that it is a "primitive" country. What do you think the airport you land at will look like? Will the people in the country be friendly, withdrawn, suspicious, or abusive? Will your trip be pleasant and profitable, dangerous and exciting, uncomfortable and dull, or something else?

You are in the position in which many starfaring player characters in science-fiction role-playing games (SFRPGs) find themselves. Obviously, this situation can lead to many exciting adventures, as the PCs simply won't know what to expect every time they land on a new world. However, the game masters for SFRPGs are in a special trap as a result of this unpredictability. Some games describe huge sections of interstellar space filled with dozens or even thousands of worlds (particularly GDW's Traveller and Megatraveller games), relying on pregenerated strings of statistics to describe each world. The sheer volume of space covered prevents detailed descriptions; only the briefest of notes are available.

If you are an infinitely creative GM with lots of time, this is the best possible thing for you. The less detail given on the campaign by the game's makers, the better. But if you are like me, you have limits to what you can imagine and limits on your time. It helps to have a little "push" in a particular direction, a framework on which to build a personal vision of an interstellar society and its worlds.

Some basic questions should be answered by the creators of a universe: What is each world like compared to Earth? How many "advanced" worlds lie in a sector of space? How many "primitive" ones? Where are the main trade routes? Which worlds have the most people, and which the least? What sorts of governments dot this end of space, and how are they allied? Where are the wars fought, and what are their results?

Statistics might give you all of this information and more—but they won't give you the essence of each world, the details that count most in SFRPG campaigns. What sort of culture does each world have? What distinctive social beliefs do its inhabitants share? What are its people like as friends, enemies, or business partners? What will the PCs remember about a particular world after they've left it?

Unless a scenario for a game specifically gives a setting for a planet in detail, you could find yourself falling back on stereotyped ideas about how a certain planet is supposed to look—and you will have trouble breaking out of those molds. For example, when I think of a "primitive" world society, I have an immediate image of a place where sabre-tooth tigers roam the plains, and all the men and women look like they came out of a brawny barbarian movie. Surely not all primitive worlds should resemble this!

One way to break out of stereotyped thinking is to learn to use stereotypes more effectively. Stereotypes are not bad in themselves. Everyone uses them because they help us handle large amounts of data quickly and easily. For example, when I mentioned the "brawny barbarian movie" planet, you probably thought of a host of things you associate with "brawny barbarian movies:" grunting, muscular, sword-wielding men and women in skimpy fur costumes; ruined castles; ugly, vicious monsters with big teeth; and piles of gold and gems in rotting chests hidden in dungeons. For me, the phrase "brawny barbarian movie" conjures up all of those images and more.

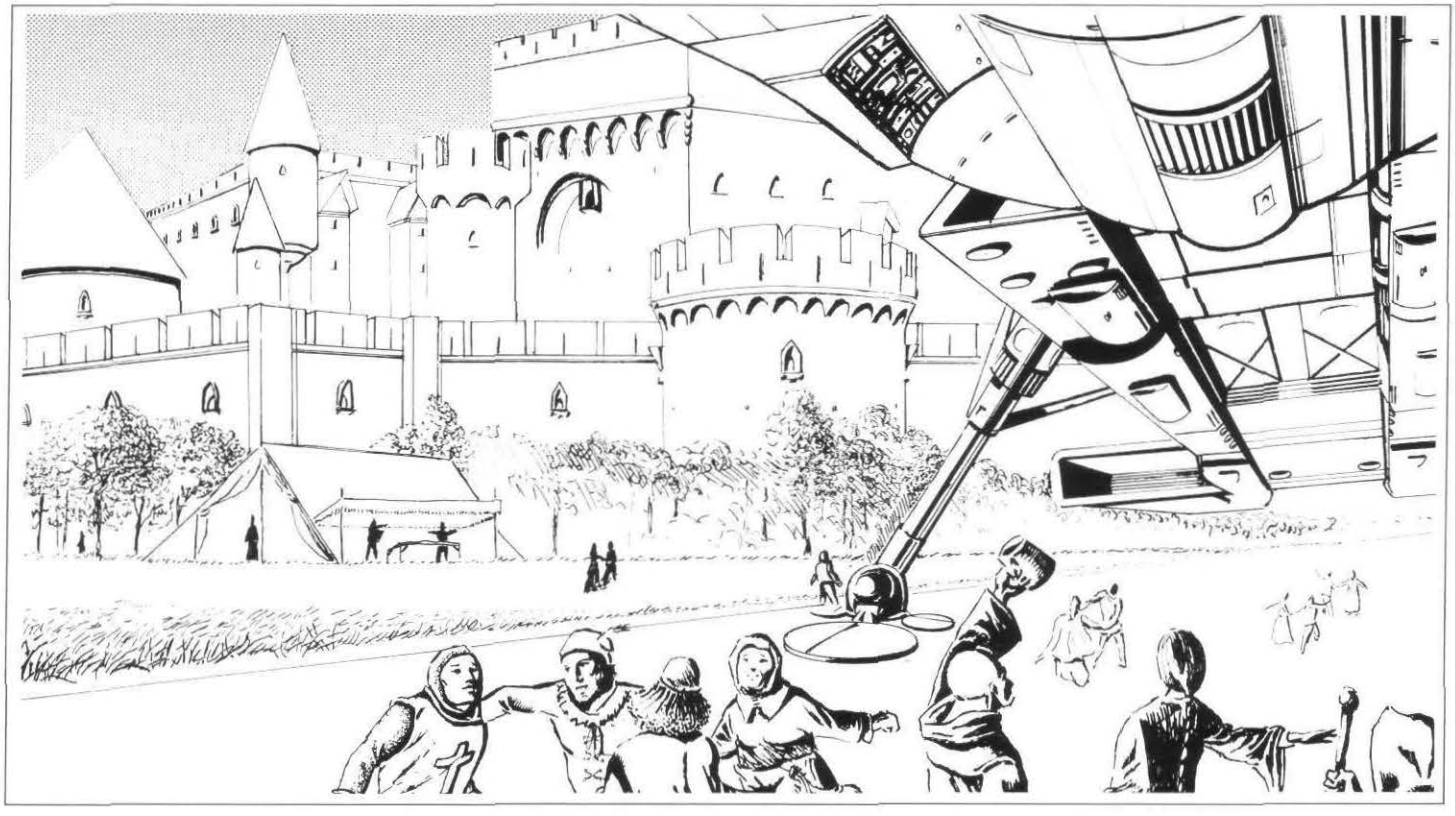
To use stereotypes more effectively (and break free of them), use **brainstorming.**

Right now, take out a sheet of paper and write the words "Primitive Planets" across the top. Now jot down every sort of technologically primitive culture you can think of, either from real-life Earth history or from science-fiction and fantasy literature. (Remember that "primitive" is a relative term here; America of 1776 can be considered primitive in many senses of the term!) You can use a type of shorthand in making your notes, like "Sumerian," "Viking," or "Ancient Chinese." Let your mind be free; don't cross out anything you write down. Add a few relevant details to each heading as well (e.g., "Viking: chain mail, swords, longships, conquest, blood feuds, horned helmets, Norse gods").

When you have 10 primitive societies noted, stop and look over your list. You now have the background you need for creating 10 different "primitive" worlds in an interstellar culture. The "1776 America" culture, for instance, becomes a society that depends heavily on animals for transportation, uses early gunpowder weapons and sailing ships, and has no computers. The society is newly nationalized, is democratic, and is expanding its borders. Disease is a major problem, and life expectancy is not long. The people are largely rural and practical. Exploration of the continent is just beginning.

Now comes the important part: breaking the mold. For each society you've written down, add details that match the society to its world and also make that society unique and unusual. The "1776 America" culture, you decide, is composed of ethnic Chinese who voluntarily gave up high technology to return to a more primitive lifestyle. They use dwarf elephants and strange six-legged local beasts instead of horses, and gunpowder weapons are outlawed except for use by the local militia and game wardens. A local bacterium has caused everyone's skin to turn bright orange (and it will do the same to those who visit the world). That's just the beginning of the list of things that make this world unique—but it is still your "1776 America" world, too.

Some specific examples of brainstormed "primitive" worlds follow. For the purposes of this article, each world is assumed to be identical to every other one in terms of physical characteristics: size, gravity, atmosphere, climate, etc. All are essentially Earthlike; only the cultural aspects are changed to make them unique. (Of course, you are free to change such worlds even further by altering their physical properties. Never, never, never let the players or their PCs think the universe is predictable!) It is also assumed that each world has but one major culture. It is much more realistic to assume each colonized



world has many individual cultures. However, on a practical level, it would be impossible to spend the time required to develop that many nations.

Each world description includes the stereotype on which the world culture is based, the changes ("surprises") that break the stereotype, and possible adventures and problems that the PCs can encounter. GMs may freely borrow these ideas and fit them into their own campaigns, and should develop their own new worlds as well. Remember: Your players have probably read this article, too.

New Columbia

Stereotype: Here you have a medieval European culture, complete with warring nobles, castles, knights in armor, feudalism, fairs and tournaments, and serfs. The fragmented culture is descended from a much older nation (like the Roman Empire). Class lines are strong, divided between a great peasant class, a few wealthy rulers and landowners, and a developing middle class of merchants. Science is primitive, and superstition is strong.

Surprises: The world culture descended from an old American agricultural colony that collapsed from the ravages of famine and plague. Its people are aware of their origins but know little about the current interstellar culture; rumors, myths, and fables about space are rampant. The world has little to contribute to interstellar culture and trade, and contact with it is heavily restricted by the interstellar government—not that such prohibitions work. Contact with the interstellar culture is sporadic and depends entirely upon the whims and daring of individual starship captains and private individuals, nearly all of whom are motivated by profit.

In theory, each feudal lord ("governor") must direct spaceship crews to his king ("the President"), but in practice each governor makes secret deals with visiting crews for high-tech devices, particularly weapons. The recent influx of high-tech weapons is about to lead to war, as many governors and city mayors are at odds with the President of New Columbia—and with each other.

Adventures: The President and the governors will attempt, either personally or through their agents, to get the PCs to give them special deals on high-tech weaponry. Some will use charisma, flattery, and bribery (using gems and precious metals); some will use violent means such as kidnapping and murder. If a governor could gain the services of an armed starship, the world might be his to command; so far, no such attempt has succeeded. If the PCs smuggle arms to this world, they will have violated interstellar law and will be subject to arrest or attack by the authorities. They also might be attacked by pirates or smugglers using one or more governors as planetside contacts. And the PCs might be around when the great civil war breaks loose, too.

Notes: Interested GMs might wish to read Poul Anderson's *The High Crusade* for other ideas on handling the cross-mixing of medieval culture and SF technology. Some fantasy RPG campaigns also use SF elements; see TSR's AD&D® SPELLJAMMER™ campaign supplement, for example, or Games Workshop's Warhammer 40,000 miniatures system (which is an SF campaign with fantasy elements).

Tranquility

Stereotype: Imagine a long-lived and relatively stable world culture patterned after the ancient Chinese empires, ruled by a divine emperor with a

mandate from the gods, supported by an immense state bureaucracy open to anyone who can pass the required exams. Nearly the entire world's population lives by farming, using only human motive power (few tamed animals exist). "Outsiders" are looked down upon as barbarians; nothing is allowed to disturb the tranquility of the empire, which is concerned only with itself and little else. The emperor and his government encourage literacy and the fine arts, but the sciences are strictly monitored by the emperor to control their effects on society.

Surprises: The people of this world are human enough, being descended from an obscure religious sect thousands of years old, dating back to the start of the Space Age. They work hard, but they are healthy, cultured, and inclined to debate deep philosophical issues. Their emperor, however, is a decentralized, self-aware computer with huge data banks, uncounted redundant systems, and effective immortality. Everyone knows that "Guardian" is a computer; Guardian is alleged to be completely unbiased, supremely intelligent, and utterly devoted to its charges, who would willingly die for their leader (who is seen as synonymous with the world culture itself). In truth, Guardian is much loved by its people. It is generally believed that Guardian's directives are divinely inspired, and many say that Guardian is a god. Guardian does little to discourage this, though it does prevent excesses of religious fervor that could lead to violence and social upheaval. The computer communicates with its subjects through numerous "oracles" (man-portable or stationary terminals) scattered the length and breadth of the world. Guardian is served by a technologically trained elite called Servitors, who acquire the materials needed to keep the computer functioning.

It is universally believed that Guardian is a primitive sort of computer, and most sociologists who visit Tranquility regard it as a quaint culture that is of no threat to anyone. Indeed, they feel it will be a sad day when Guardian finally "breaks down" and dies, as all computers (and intelligent beings) will do. The world culture will then be in trouble, but that is Tranquility's problem.

What few people know is that Guardian is not an antique. The Servitors have, under Guardian's direction, constantly upgraded its systems until it is certainly one of the most powerful, intelligent, and indestructible of all computer systems. Indeed, Guardian has agents reaching all across the galaxy, gathering intelligence on the state of interstellar society to determine if it presents a threat to Tranquility. Thousands of remote sensing probes, stations, and satellites are scattered across Tranquility's solar system and among its moons, often dropped off by unwitting merchants who believe they are completing jobs for the interstellar government or for private corporations (some of the latter are merely fronts for Guardian's operations).

Guardian is no fool, and neither is it insane or dangerously misguided. It is merely acting on its most central programming command: Protect and nurture the people of Tranquility. To this end, Guardian will stop at little. It has successfully manipulated everything from individual humans to whole corporations, once even tricking a space fleet into attacking and destroying a pirate base located on an outer moon of Tranquility.

Adventures: The PCs will probably have a number of encounters on Tranquility, usually for trade, without realizing that they have been manipulated by Guardian into accomplishing some task it desires. For the most part, the PCs will interact with bored Servitors or shy but inquisitive commoners, all of whom leave the impression of being very naive (which is true enough of most of them). PCs may deliver high-tech satellites and probes to the Tranquility system in the belief that such items are to be used for finding resources or scientific research; however, these devices are adding to one of the most complete and extraordinary defense systems known, all under the control of Guardian. Guardian may even infect the PCs' ship's computer with a virus that monitors the ship's functions, preventing certain systems, such as the ship's weapons, from being used against Tranquility or Guardian. Or it could allow the ship to be taken over by Guardian through its defense satellites. (There is an old story about a pirate ship whose weapons actually turned on the pirates after they visited the Tranquility system.)

Notes: It is worth hunting for D. F. Jones' Colossus trilogy (*Colossus, The Fall of Colossus,* and *Colossus and the Crab)* to get a better feel for the potential power of a world-controlling computer. Several *Star Trek* episodes dealt with computer-led societies, but these were almost always destroyed or altered for the alleged good of those so governed. The GM should take a different tack here, assuming instead that it isn't such a bad idea for a well-made computer system to run things.

Vizahsh

Stereotype: This world's culture is remarkably like that of the American frontier in the mid-1800s (or, at least, as it is depicted in books and movies on the Old West). Mining, ranching, farming, and the like are practiced across immense areas of wilderness, ranging from deserts to arctic tundra. Arms are commonly available, and transportation depends on animal power and steam trains. Few major cities exist; most people prefer "wide open spaces" on which to live. Rugged individualism is a respected trait. A minority ethnic group was present before the current colonists landed, but this ethnic group has suffered badly and is in decline. The minority is leading a guerilla war against the invaders, though with little chance of success.

Surprises: The dominant "cowboy" ethnic group is composed of reptilian aliens called the Kronx; the minority "Indian" ethnic group is composed of humans descended from an ancient colony that reverted to barbarism a thousand years before. The Kronx landed on this world only a century ago, setting up a small colony to harvest the world's rich resources. The colony was kept low-tech so that it could more easily create and replace its own manufactured goods without depending on spacefaring society to support it (the colonists were, as mentioned, "rugged individualists"). The Kronx have little respect for the humans, who raid Kronx settlements and steal their weapons, but they have great moral qualms about committing genocide. They just want to tame the world and get rich from its wealth. The humans want the Kronx to leave so that the humans can return to their old hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

The Kronx themselves have a respectable interstellar culture, and they would take a dim view of anyone who helped the human minority gain weapons or high technology (the Kronx technically own Vizahsh). However, the Kronx would appreciate anyone who could help pacify the humans without destroying them completely. The Kronx would prefer to assimilate the humans

Continued on page 30

Into The 25th Century

A Look At The BUCK ROGERS® Role-Playing Game

Buck Rogers is only an NPC, albeit a powerful one, in the BUCK ROGERS® role playing game scheduled for release by TSR, Inc. this summer. The product will be titled BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™ Role-Playing Game. It is being designed by Mike Pondsmith, president of R. Talsorian Games and an avid Buck Rogers fan.

Pondsmith claims the XXVc game will be different than any other science fiction role playing game because the system will be based on the AD&D® game, yet will rely on "pure science." "We will be using almost the same character stats as the AD&D game, but we may swap Wisdom for Tech. It will use the same combat system. But it will use a skill system rather than proficiencies." He added characters will go up levels just like they do in the AD&D game.

The character classes will include:

Rocket Jocks, "the Right Stuff kind of guys," Pondsmith said. "They can fly anything. Buck Rogers is a Rocket Jock."

War Leaders, such as Wilma Deering, who have the ability to command troops.

Rangers, which are a cross between the AD&D game ranger class and today's armed forces airborne rangers.

Engineers, who are specialized technicians.

Astrogators, who are responsible for navigating ships and picking up disturbances and communications from other ships.

Rogues, who are thieves and information brokers.

Warriors specializing in various weapons.

Gennies, genetically altered humans, many of these characters have animal traits.

And **Altered Humans** similar to demi-humans in the AD&D game in that they are adapted to their environment, such as gnomes to the underground.

The game will be a boxed set with three books: *Characters and Combat, Worlds,* and *Technology.* The set will include space maps and ship deck plans. Later, source books for Earth, Mars, and Buck Rogers will be released.

Pondsmith said he didn't want to create a game where Buck Rogers was one of the player characters. Everyone would want to be Buck Rogers, he said. "It's like Indiana Jones. Everyone would want to play Indiana. Who would want to play Short Round?"

Pondsmith said R. Talsorian Games had considered doing a Buck Rogers role playing game when company officials learned TSR, Inc. held the Buck Rogers license. He said he was doing freelance work at the time in addition to his duties at R. Talsorian, so he contacted TSR to let them know he was interested in doing one of the modules for their Buck Rogers game. Instead, Pondsmith was put in charge of designing the game.

Pondsmith is also the creator of *Teenagers From Outer Space* and *Cyberpunk,* both by R. Talsorian Games.

Pondsmith's first exposure to role playing games came about 15 years ago when he played the D&D® game in college. When he returned to college about seven years ago to study design, he began playing the AD&D game because he wanted to date a fellow player, Lisa, who is now his wife and who also works for R. Talsorian Games.

"The thing is, fantasy bores the heck out of me," Pondsmith said. "I thought about doing something with science fiction. Then one day someone handed me a copy of *Traveller.* I went through 20 pages and couldn't figure out how to kill a character. It was very difficult to kill a character in that game except when you were rolling one up. There were problems with the first edition." Eventually, Pondsmith said he tried to adapt the D&D game to a science fiction setting, but at the time it didn't quite work.

The 25th Century will have the feel of older science fiction, and while it will concentrate on pure science to explain why things work, such as ray guns and helmets, science will not bog down the game, he said. "It will just make it more believable without getting in the way of a ripping good yarn.

"I started by looking at the older science fiction—science fiction of the 50s and 60s when Wernher von Braun acted as a consultant on stuff," Pondsmith said. "That science fiction had nuclear rockets, fusion rockets, lasers—all very possible things, but some of which haven't gotten done in real life because of economics.

"Our game will have rocket ships that take off from the tail. There will be no artificial gravity, no hyper drive. The idea is to use cutting edge technology with a Buck Rogers feel of two-fisted adventure."

The game's setting is the solar system, which players are limited to because faster-than-light travel is not available. The Earth is a shambles. There are vast, sprawling ruins on the planet that are populated by nomads and gangs. And there are self-contained city states in large intact buildings.

The Martians are much like the German Nazis of the 30s, he said, and they are bent on despoiling Earth further.

There are also many other cultures in the solar system with which the PCs can clash.

Pondsmith said player characters will have many options for adventures, whether they want to deal with the remaining cultures on Earth, become involved with the war between the Martians and humans, follow Buck Rogers around on missions, or just explore the solar system.

"I suspect many characters will buy an old rocket ship and recondition it. One guy will fly it, one will navigate it, and one guy will keep it running. And maybe somewhere along the line they'll pick up a medic. It will be like building an adventuring party in the AD&D game," he said.

Pondsmith said he has long been a fan of Buck Rogers. "When I was a kid I got a big yellow book that was the collected works of Buck Rogers." He still recalls the plots of the comic strips in that book. "There was one where the heroes had to patch a wrecked cruiser on the moon, while coming out from Mars was a Martian ace in a long, slender ship. They meet and duke it out over the surface of the moon. Eventually they both get shot down. The Martian runs away and Buck goes after him. Buck takes off his rocket pack and goes after him man-to-man. Why am I a Buck Rogers fan? Buck Rogers is a hero." ❑

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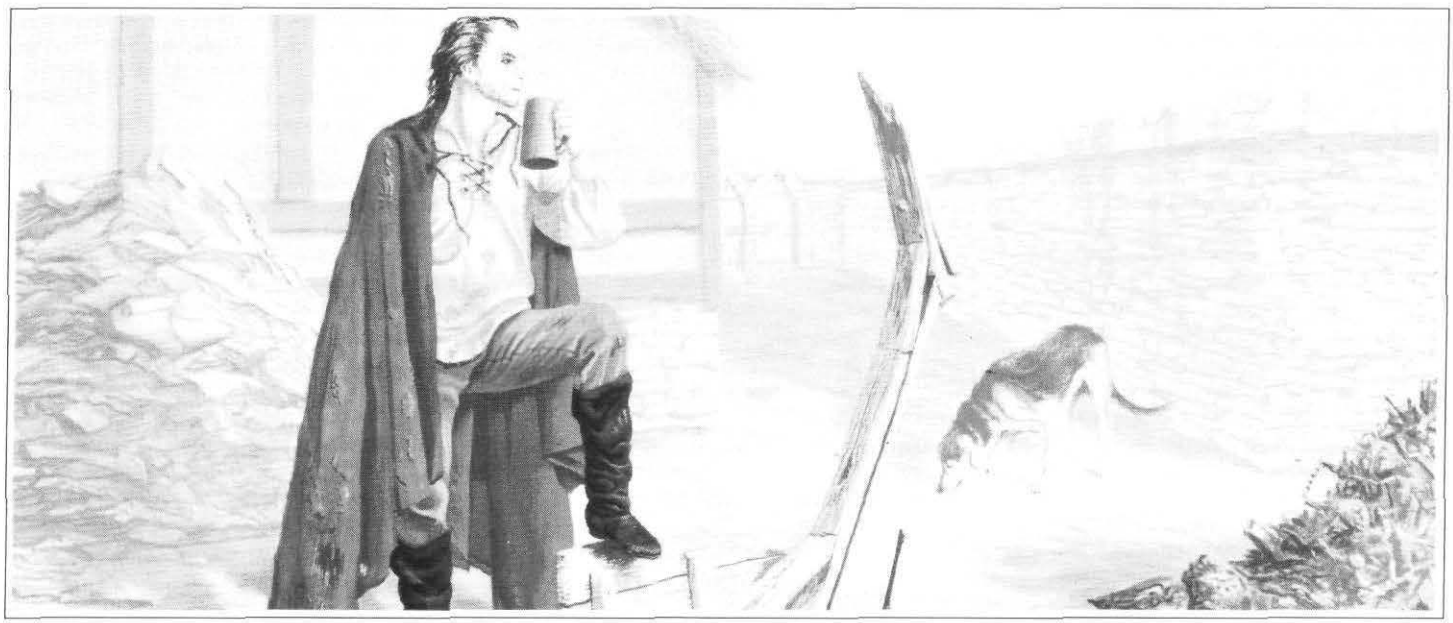
The Living City

The Ravens Bluff Sanitation Facility



by James P. Buchanan

Several years ago, Mayor Charles O'Kane saw that the streets of Ravens Bluff were filling with garbage, encouraging the spread of disease and attracting rodents. Local fisherman told the mayor the harbor also was dirty, being polluted by household waste. The contaminated harbor water was killing some of the fish and some of the mammals that ate the fish. This upset O'Kane and the area druids.

O'Kane knew that the garbage problems would only worsen. He also knew that the garbage, threat of plagues, large number of insects and rodents, and the terrible smell would drive the middle class into the nearby countryside. O'Kane quickly passed a law requiring all citizens to collect and move their garbage to one location. He knew that the local druids, rangers, and elves would object to burning or burying the garbage or dumping it into the sea. Therefore, the same law also authorized funds for the government to construct a suitable facility to recycle or destroy the city's trash.

To encourage the population to follow the law, a minimal bounty, or reward, was set up for each person bringing garbage to the dump. The Living City pays a bounty of one copper coin for every pound of trash brought in. Thus, vagrants and down-on-their luck adventurers earn small sums for bringing what trash is thrown into the streets to the dump. Tanneries and businesses which produce hazardous garbage are paid three copper per pound for their waste.

In addition, the city employs a group of roguish street cleaners who also take trash to the dump.

A 10-foot-high stone fence covered with climbing flowers and ivy surrounds the garbage facility. The single gate is a pair of iron-reinforced wooden doors set near a gatehouse. Over the gates is a sign written in Common, reading: "Ravens Bluff Sanitation Facility." Below it reads: "We pay for your TRASH." Inside the walls, and next to the gatehouse, is a large iron scale, used to weigh trash to determine bounty payment. This plain, but accurate iron scale is five feet high and six feet wide, weighs 800 pounds, and is worth 2,000 gp.

During the daylight hours, John Porter, the dump's only foreman, usually can be found drinking coffee inside the gatehouse. John dresses in plain, muddy clothing, speaks in a low, monotone voice, and only will start conversations with people who are well dressed. John oversees the work of a dozen 0-level humans who are employed by the sanitation facility. The humans are former slaves who have escaped by boat across the Sea Of Fallen Stars. They are uneducated and unable to do much more than manual labor.

When the garbage is weighed, the workers check it to make sure no rocks, sand, or other weight has been hidden inside to up the poundage. There is a 40% chance that anyone with "loaded" garbage will be caught; anyone caught is fined 10 times the weight of the "loaded" garbage in coppers. After the trash is weighed, and if no rocks or weights are found, John renders the appropriate bounty payments.

Trash is sorted into several piles: glass, metals, paper, spell components, wood, decomposing food, and weeds. Sometimes an item of real value, such as a coin accidently discarded, turns up in a load of trash. There is an unwritten law among the workers that whoever finds something valuable in the garbage gets to keep it.

The workers keep several small incense burners lit to keep the foul odors from smelling up the neighborhood. In addition, the incense tends to keep away gulls, ravens, squirrels, and rats which would frequent the dump for dinner. The incense does not work on

larger animals, and because of that low-level player characters could be hired to chase away large animals or to hunt down nuisance animals, such as rogue bears trying to get inside the dump.

At least once a week, buyers from Ravens Bluff and the surrounding countryside come to the dump to purchase stockpiled trash. Farmers purchase the compostable garbage to use as fertilizer; this accounts for most of the trash. The resident wizard, Marian Wicksal, always gets first choice of any spell components found.

What trash is not sold, including items that are dangerous, such as acids and poisons, is destroyed by Marian Wicksal. She places the trash on her static *sphere of annihilation.* The *sphere* is kept inside a locked stone and cement vault. The inside of the vault is covered with thick lead panels bolted into the walls. The door is made of iron and is two inches thick. The door opens outward; thieves attempting to pick it do so at a -50% chance because of the complex lock.

Marian wears the only key to the vault on a chain around her neck. As a further precaution, she hired a 10th-level priest to cast a *glyph of warding* on the floor between the door and *sphere*; the *glyph's* effect is a *flame strike* spell. The *glyph* can be deactivated by saying "zodiac." If the *sphere* is moved by anyone other than Marian, a *magic mouth* goes off, yelling, "Alert the citywatch. Someone is trying to steal the *sphere*!" The existence of the *sphere* is also known to Lord Mayor O'Kane, Howard Holiday, John Porter, a few trusted workers, and Rouge, Marian's psuedo dragon familiar. The other residents of the city believe the unwanted trash is dumped into a dry well.

Because of the amount of paper in the dump, there is a 5% chance per week that a fire will break out. Two small water towers at the facility are used to combat fires. Fires are quickly put out to prevent the stench of burning trash from polluting the city's air.

Marian Wicksal

5th Level Female Human Wizard

STR: 10
INT: 17
WIS: 15
DEX: 16
CON: 13
CHA: 14
COM: 15

AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 7
Hit Points: 12
Alignment: Neutral Good
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger
Special Abilities: Ancient History, Ancient Languages, Reading/Writing, Spellcraft, Swimming
Languages: Common, Hill Dwarf, Sun Elf, Gnome
Magic Items: *Sphere of annihilation, talisman of the sphere, ring of regeneration, cloak of protection +3*

Spell Books:

Level 1 Spells

Color Spray	*Detect Magic*
Read Magic	*Gaze Reflection*
Message	*Hold Portal*
Sleep	*Shield*

Level 2 Spells

Blur	*Knock*
Web	*Magic Mouth*
ESP	*Scare*

Level 3 Spells

Fly	*Clairaudience*
Slow	*Clairvoyance*

Familiar: Rouge: AC 2; MV 6, Fl 24 (B); HD 2; hp 12; #AT 1; D 1-3 + special; SA poison sting; SD chameleon power; MR 35%; S T (1 foot long)

Marian is 26 years old, stands 6' tall, and weighs 152 pounds. She has pale blond hair and light blue eyes. She was born to a Waterdeep family well respected for their skill in magic. She chose to study magic beginning in her early teens, learning from her mother, Mayflower Wicksal. Marian spent three years as an apprentice to several mages before moving to Ravens Bluff.

In the city, Marian formed a group of adventurers and explored many nearby caves and ruins. On one outting the group found and mapped the ruins of a castle built between two mountains. Under the ruins the group found a series of natural caverns which they investigated without taking precautions. The caverns were the home of a vampire, which killed two members of the group before it was killed by the party's cleric. Also in the caverns was a mature red dragon, which the party killed after much effort and a few more fatalities. In the treasure horde was a *sphere of annihilation*, a *talisman of the sphere,* and a treasure map, all of which Marian claimed. She left the other magic items and all of the wealth to the other surviving members of the group.

The adventurers parted company, with most of them retiring to businesses and homes in and near Ravens Bluff. Through his influence, Lord Mayor O'Kane learned of Marian's *sphere* and offered her the easy job of destroying garbage with it. She had little alternative; if she didn't take the job O'Kane wanted her out of town, as he perceived the *sphere* as a threat.

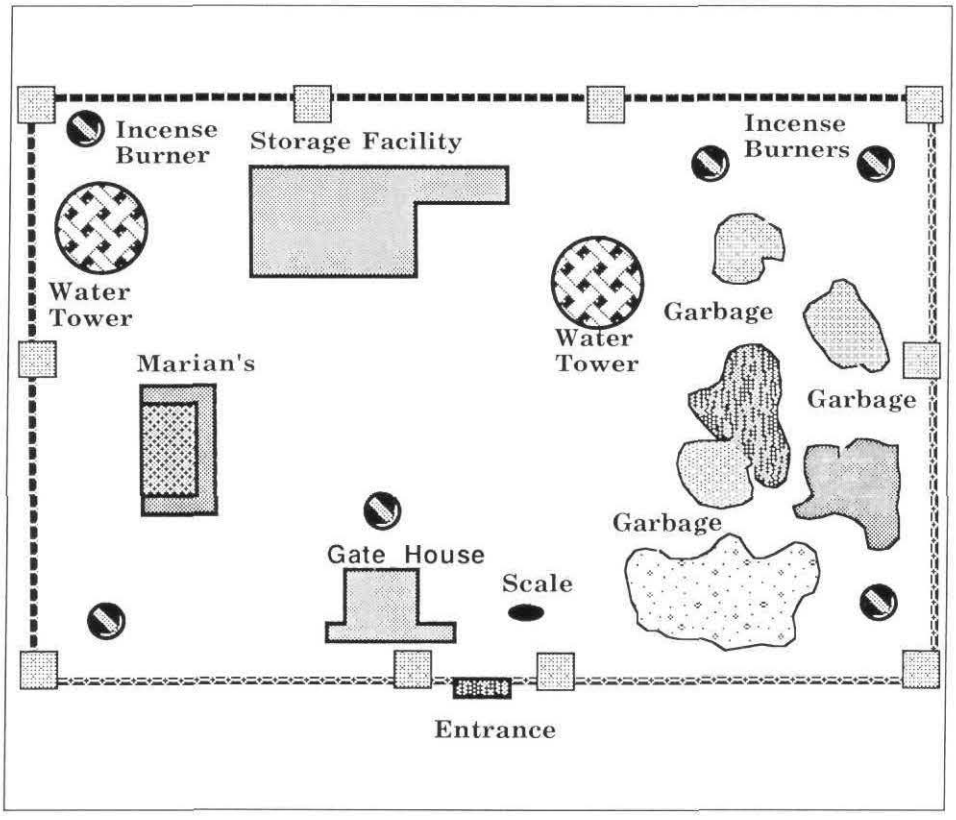
Marian is friendly to people who come to the dump. When at the dump, she dresses in flowing robes of grays and browns. She never leaves her home without her male pseudo-dragon, which calls himself Rouge.

Rouge is peaceful and spends most of his time near Marian or inside his hollow tree counting his collection of 24 gems. He has had several adventures with the faerie dragon Peppercorn from the For-rest Inn (POLYHEDRON™ Newszine #49). There is a 10% chance the pair will be together at the dump when player characters visit the scene.

Marian spends most of her time studying magic. She enjoys the companionship of elves, and will go out of her way to make friends with them. She always tries to see the good in people, a trait which blinds her to people's faults. She does not know that John Porter is a member of a thieves guild and does not know about his dealing inside of the gatehouse.

Marian sometimes ponders adventuring again. The treasure map she recovered from the dragon's lair shows the location of a powerful wizard's tomb. The map hints the tomb contains chests filled with coins and magical treasures, including a *ring of wizardry* and a *robe of stars.* The map also reveals that the treasure is guarded by at least one stone golem. She keeps the treasure map hidden behind a decorative shield that hangs on a wall in her room.

Because she saw two of her friends killed by a vampire, Marian has an irrational fear of undead. If Marian encounters undead, she must save vs. her wisdom or flee for 1d6 rounds.



John Porter

4th Level Male Human Thief

STR: 11
INT: 12
WIS: 10
DEX: 17
CON: 11
CHA: 13
COM: 8
AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 8
Hit Points: 15
Alignment: Lawful Evil
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Short Bow, Short Sword
Special Abilities: Appraising, Forgery, Swimming, Reading/Writing
Languages: Common, Thieves' Cant
Magic Items: *Dagger +1 Ring of Protection +2, Ring of Water Walking*

John Porter has shoulder length black hair and dark brown eyes. He is 23 years old, stands 5'5" tall, and weighs 139 pounds. John's parents were accomplished thieves, and they started him in the profession at a very early age. When John was three years old, his parents began their own guild, called The Four Ravens. However, the major guild in town, afraid of the Porters' competition, betrayed the couple to the Ravens Bluff city watch. Tordon Sureblade personally oversaw the trial and hanging of the Porter couple. Young John did not understand the events at the time. However, as he grew and learned more about the incident. He joined a guild which he knows was not involved with betraying his parents.

John is motivated only by greed and revenge, and he uses the sanitation facility gatehouse for a number of criminal operations. The guild he belongs to uses the gatehouse as a message drop. John feels safe in the gatehouse, and it is the only place where he will accept the messages, business floor plans, and other documents.

John spends some of his time at work acquiring information on the city's wealthier citizens, their homes, and their businesses. He does this by bribing underpaid servants who bring garbage to the dump. John pays two to 40 gp for information, depending on the value of that information. Within the same day, John takes any information he has received and passes it on to the guild headquarters. After the burglary of the wealthy residence or business, John is given a 5% to 10% cut of any loot taken; the bigger the take, the bigger his percentage.

In addition, John also operates as one of the guild's fences, buying stolen goods which he sells to dishonest sailors who in turn sell the goods in other cities. He hides the stolen goods and written records of his dealings in a secret room under the gatehouse. John also hides there a set of black clothing, a second *ring of protection +2*, and a *dagger +1*.

John goes on adventures only if he is promised at least 10% of the take.

He is careful not to extend his illegal dealings to the actual operation of the sanitation facility. He will not embezzel any of the trash bounty money because he does not want to risk drawing attention to himself or the dump. To use a city-financed facility as a cover for a theives guild is just too convenient and valuable to jeopardize.

John exchanges information or stolen goods only when he and his fellow guild members are inside the gatehouse. If player characters are hired by the city to investigate John, they must catch him in the act of exchanging information or goods or any charges will not stick. If John is discovered in an illegal act, or if he feels threatened, he tries to escape through a secret tunnel leading from the gatehouse to a small grove of trees outside the city wall. John fights to the death if he is cornered.

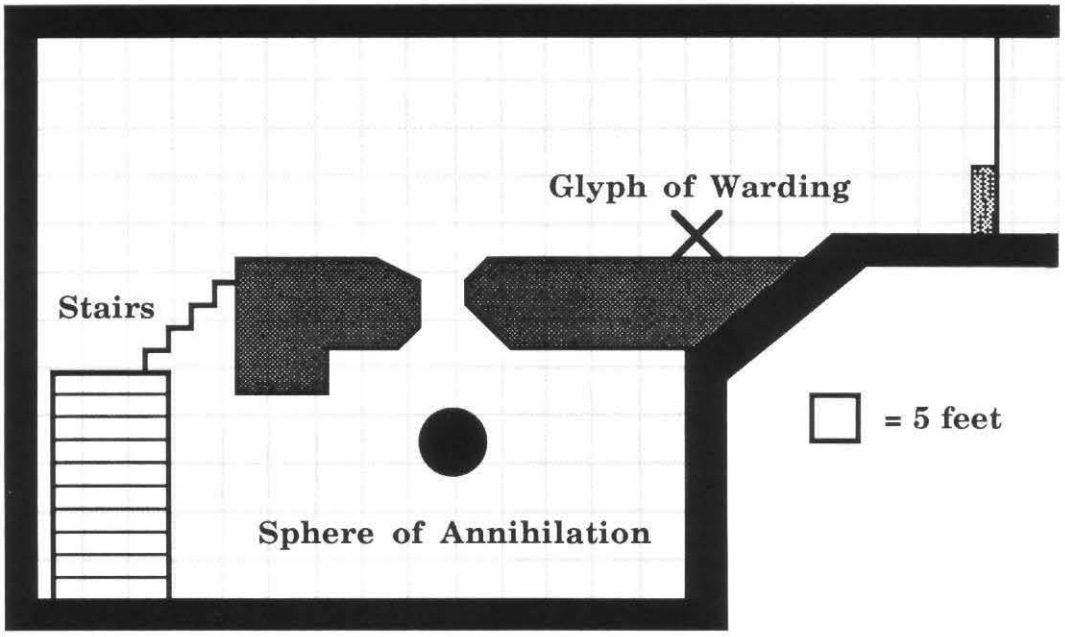
John's long-range goal is to kill Tordon Sureblade and bring back The Four Ravens thieves guild, which he intends to make the most powerful guild in the city.

Taking pride in being considered one of the criminal element, John thinks of everyone he meets as objects to be used. He tries to rob people who openly display wealth. PCs visiting the sanitation facility are potential targets, especially because John does not think well of adventurers. Spending most of his life sharpening his theiving skills, John has rarely ventured outside the walls of Ravens Bluff. He thinks anyone who would voluntarily spend time in a forest or dungeon is crazy.

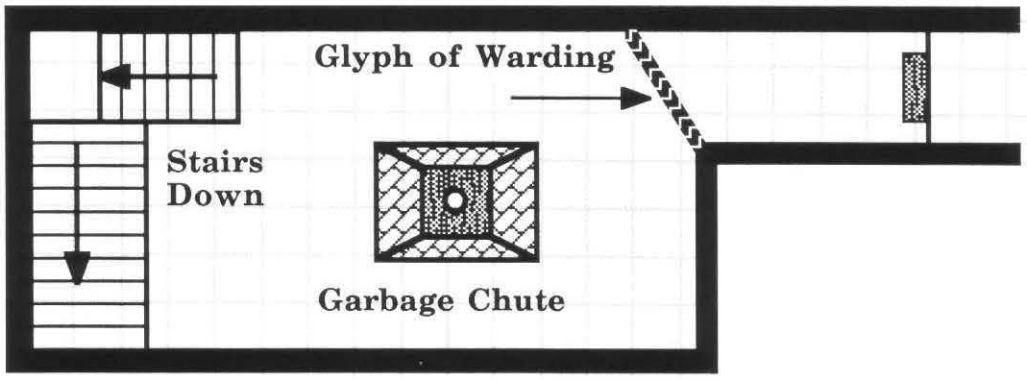
He lives in a rented house near the docks, where he makes daily trips to purchase seafood, which he loves almost as much as gold. There is a 25% chance that PCs dining at Embrol Sludge's Eatery and Shell Shoppe (POLYHEDRON™ Newszine #46), will see John there. ❑

Storage (Disposal) Facility

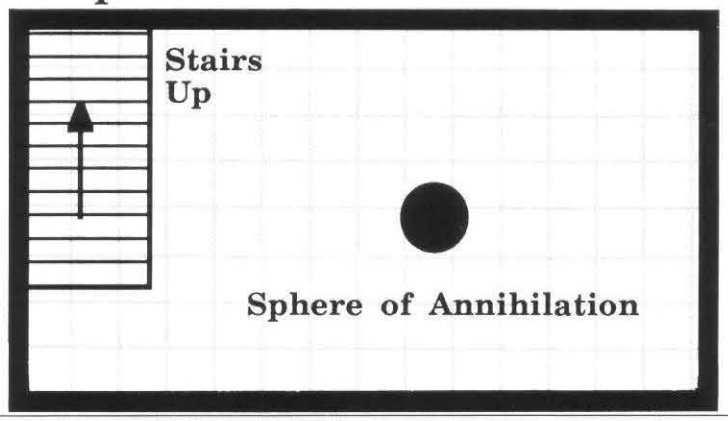
Side View



First Level



Disposal level



Expanding Into Europe

The RPGA™ Network Opens A Branch Office

This is a year of a triple celebration; the 10th anniversary of the RPGA™ Network, the 10th anniversary of TSR, Inc.'s U.K. office, and the birth of the Network's European branch, which will be operated out of TSR Ltd. in Cambridge, England.

Malcolm Mitchell, general manager of TSR Ltd., said he expects the English branch to have a few thousand members by the end of the year. The Network branch will be managed by Associate Network Coordinator for England, Sue Lilley.

The English branch will allow gamers in many countries to become Network members for about the same price that gamers in the United States pay. Those countries covered by the European branch include: England, Norway, Ireland, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, West Germany, East Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Morocco, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Israel, and South Africa.

All Network members will receive the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, which is the official magazine of the Network. It is the way Network members can learn about new things in the industry, Network plans, and can see their work in print. But the cost of mailing the Newszine outside of the U.S. is why international memberships have been so costly. The branch office allows us to offer memberships to its countries at lower prices because POLYHEDRON Newszine will be shipped to TSR Ltd., which in turn will mail them to European members. It costs far less to make one shipment of Newszines by sea to the Cambridge office than to mail each individual Newszine at surface mail or air mail rates from Lake Geneva to members living in Europe. The European branch office can mail the Newszines at its regular postal rates; all of which means we can offer memberships through the branch office at a lower price because our postage costs have been cut.

The HQ staff has moved up the production time on the Newszine to ensure that European members receive the Newszine at about the same time as members in the U.S. and Canada, and international members who have air mail subscriptions.

The Network hopes to open other branches in the future to better serve all its international members.

POLYHEDRON Newszine will continue to be produced in its entirety out of the Lake Geneva office. Network members outside of Europe should continue to send all tournaments and Newszine submissions to: RPGA Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, USA. If you don't live in the United States be sure to include the letters "USA" on the last line of the address; a lot of our unlabled mail gets mis-delivered to Geneva Switzerland.

Members covered by the European branch office should contact: RPGA Network Europe, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB 1 3 LB, United Kingdom to request tournaments for local conventions and for problems with Newszine delivery. European members can send tournament and Newszine submissions to the U.K. address, but these will be forwarded directly to the Lake Geneva office.

European GEN CON® Game Fair

The RPGA Network will be prominently featured at this new convention, scheduled for November 22–25 at the Camber Sands Holiday Centre on the southeast coast of England near the town of Rye in Sussex. Discount travel rates by road and rail are available on request from the convention staff.

Gaming will be held on two large floors, each of which can accomodate up to 1,500 gamers. RPGA Network tournaments include an AD&D® game team, AD&D game open, AD&D game European Invitational, AD&D game benefit for Children In Need, BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™ Role-Playing Game, and BOOT HILL® game.

RPGA Network members planning to attend the convention, and willing to judge events, should contact the Network European branch office.

For more information on the convention, refer to the Conventions announcements in this issue.

Happy Anniversary TSR Ltd.

TSR opened an office in England in January, 1980. The office recently moved to a large office/warehouse complex a short distance from the Cambridge Airport. It is the distribution center for all TSR products throughout Europe and Scandinavia.

The office employs 17 people. The office is responsible for the European GEN CON Game Fair and the annual Games Fair at Reading University in March.

TSR Ltd. is dedicated to giving gamers in Europe the same service available in the United States. For example, when the AD&D 2nd Edition Player's Handbook was released last summer people on both sides of the Atlantic scrambled to get a planeload of books into the air and safely to England. Several hours after the presses stopped rolling in the United States, an enormous shipment of Player's Handbooks was tucked away in the Cambridge warehouse and the new book was on sale in Europe the same day it was released in the United States. Other new products published each month in the United States are available in Europe just as quickly. ❑

The New Rogues Gallery

A Half-Ogre And His Deathball Game

by Eric Scott Vaughn

Laemos (la mos)

14th Level Male Half-Ogre Fighter

AC Normal: −1
AC Rear: −1
Move: 6
Hit Points: 160
#AT: 1 (head) or 2 (fists)
Dmg: See below (+7 for strength)
Special Abilities: Regenerate 1 hp/round, infravision 60′
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Size: L (7′8″ tall)
Age: 35
Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword
Languages: Common, Thorass, Sun Elf, Dwarven

Magic Items: *Bag of holding* (1,500 gp weight capacity), *Potion of growth* (one dose, kept in *bag of Holding*), *ring of free action, boots of speed* (heavy duty variety with cleats that allow him a 24 move), *bracers of defense AC 2, gauntlets of smiting* (+1 "to hit," 1–6 Damage each), *helm of headlong assaults* (+3 "to hit," 3–12 damage), *jersey of warmth* (as the ring), *necklace of adaption, shoulder pads of protection* (+3 to AC only), *spade of colossal excavation* (kept in *bag of holding*)
Wealth: (All carried in the *bag of holding*) 1,275 gold coins, seven cut diamonds (valued at 12,000 gp each, one large, cut ruby (valued at 9,000 gp)

Appearance: Laemos, a running back, has dark green skin, black hair, and weighs 397 pounds. He wears a uniform of ocean blue on white, displaying the number 27.

Background: Of Laemos' early history, much is left to speculation. It is known that he is the product of a half-ogre and troll union. There is no tangible evidence, but some suspect that he was born in the kingdom of Thay.

Although Ravens Bluff scholars are by no means certain, they generally agree that Laemos was abandoned as a child by what passed for his "natural" parents. The first true record of Laemos' life began when a passing caravan found him. The trainmaster noted in his journals that his caravan happened upon the misbegotten creature only hours before starvation had the chance to do it in. The same trainmaster is purported to have sold the creature to slavers upon reaching his destination.

During the scholars' research, they found three surprisingly accurate ledgers belonging to Laemos' first owner. These ledgers show that Laemos found himself constantly fighting in various arenas throughout the Forgotten Realms. This lasted for more than twenty years, during which time he became known as "the most vicious player in deathball history!"

Even after he gained his freedom, Laemos decided to remain in the games. His success was significant enough for him to commission the enchantment of several magic items. Most of these items were oriented toward "assisting" his deathball playing.

The only noted trouble he ever had was when he found himself put up against a would-be wizard. Therein lies a tale:

"Hut One!"

The centaur's hoarse voice had been worn down by his constant yelling until it was only a rasp.

The temperature had soared since the early morning. Well over ninety degrees in the shade, the game proceded headlong into the longest overtime ever recorded in deathball history.

Laemos wiped the pool of hot sweat from his steamy forehead. "I'm a fighter and a warrior," he whispered to himself. "But as soon as that stupid centaur gives me the ball, I'll have to work hard on just staying alive."

Unlike many of his teammates who were owned by some local lord or debutante, Laemos was no longer a slave. He played the game because he loved it. From simply scoring a goal to stomping his sharpened cleats on the body of an opponent he just knocked down, he found many pleasures in the game.

He was, by popular consent, considered the best deathball player in the kingdom, possibly the best in all the Realms. He saw himself as a legend in his own time.

Yet, even legends have their limits. Only a few hours ago (half way through the fifth hour of overtime), Laemos reached his. Exhausted, he began to make mistakes. The most critical mistake was when he rushed the enemy team's wizard. It seemed to be easy prey at first; just another one of those "cream-poof" wizards. That was before the wizard panicked and miscast a spell.

The resulting explosion proved so powerful that it eliminated half of both teams for the remainder of the season. Laemos was taken out for over half the game. Despite everything else, he found that being half troll has its advantages; like a vigorous regeneration system that would keep him alive through incredible punishment.

When the ringing in his ears subsided, he began to broil with a soul-driven blood-lust. Laemos swore that if the wizard survived, he would show "cream-poof" that some fates are far *worse* than death ever could be.

"Hut Two!"

The centaur's rasping snapped Laemos back to reality. Eyes darting left and then right, Laemos checked his position. He signaled the centaur that he was ready, then he glanced at the enemy team's lineup.

Laemos noticed that the wizard had indeed survived the devastating blast. "Probably more magic," he muttered. He noticed that though the wizard was chanting; he was obviously "shell shocked."

Laemos chuckled. "Starting another spell, eh Cream-poof?" He closed his eyes and chuckled again. "Yah, we'll just have to see about that."

"Hut Three!"

An orc snapped the ball neatly into the centaur's sore hands, and the play was underway.

Pushing off with his powerful legs, Laemos darted forward. Grabbing the ball from the centaur, he began to run down the field.

"Here I come, girls!" Laemos roared as he sprinted toward the goal line and the wizard in front of it. "Easy forty yards."

Only one thing stood in Laemos' way as he headed toward the wizard. An elf. Laemos almost tripped over his own feet in disbelief.

"What the? How could that elf be so moronic as to even *think* he could stop me?" Laemos laughed as his fist flexed inside his metal studded gauntlet.

The elf charged, closing in on Laemos. Twenty feet were between them. Ten. The elf whipped out a golden dagger and dove toward Laemos.

There was a soft thud, followed by a muffled cry of agony. Laemos caught the elf, full force, in the stomach with the metal studs of his gauntlets.

The elf didn't even slow Laemos's stride.

Time seemed to stretch out as Laemos anticipated reaching the wizard. Seconds seemed to pass as minutes. His vision began to tunnel in on the wizard. That almost cost him his life.

Laemos was exceptionally strong and clever for a cross between a half-ogre and troll. Even so, he barely had time to react before the 12-foot-tall ettin came barreling down on him. The ettin, dumb though it was, had massive bulk, a tough hide, and two heads. It was an awesome foe for even the most hardy men.

"Ogre skum!" boomed the ettin's right head. There was a gleam in its eyes that reminded Laemos of a rabid dog. "Gonna crush you to meat 'n juice!" screamed the other head.

Instantly, Laemos slammed into the ettin, the silvery steel spikes on his helmet drove headlong into the trunk of the massive creature. He had to kill it or be killed by it, for once the ball was snapped no fouls would be called.

Sharp claws raked his back, making it burn like fire. He closed his eyes to shut out the burning pain of the obviously poisoned claws. Laemos could feel his temples throb as the poison worked its way through him.

Time almost stopped as he pressed forward. He didn't know how long it took, but the ettin finally gave way and fell onto its side. Grabbing its stomach, it could only stare in shock as cool pink blood oozed between its trembling fingers.

"That's why they sent that freaky elf at me. He was only a distraction." Laemos thought as he began running again, "Damn near worked, too." Laemos wasted no further thought on that matter, for the game needed to be won and that was all that concerned him. Almost.

Laemos ignored the pain. He screamed in rage and charged at the wizard with a renewed fervor. His cleats drove hard into the grass. As he ran, small chunks of dirt were torn away from the field.

The wizard, who was in the final stages of a *fireball* spell, glanced up to see 397 pounds of hell-wrought fury rushing toward him. Rooted to the spot by sheer terror, the wizard could do nothing except stare.

Laemos crashed through the magic runes, without giving a thought that he was tearing them up in the process. He lunged forward, roaring at the top of his lungs, and the wizard closed his eyes.

All became peaceful and silent and dark. Although the darkness soon blended back into reality, it still took Laemos a long while to realize that he was gliding through the air. Even after he hit the field and began to tumble, he felt no pain. When he finally came to a stop, he sat up and watched the flames fade away into space.

"Oh, no." Laemos muttered as he slipped back into a rather peaceful state of unconsciousness, "Not again...."

Scholars state that after reviewing the evidence available, they agree that the wizard would have been better suited as a cobbler in some remote city.

Several years later, Laemos retired from the deathball games. He soon faded into obscurity. It was not until three months ago that he reappeared in the Realms, in Ravens Bluff.

From eyewitness accounts and conversations with Laemos, himself, scholars determined that he drifted as an adventurer after his retirement.

With the help of a halfling and a severely maladjusted elf, he formed and chartered the adventuring company, "The Lost Ones." He maintains that his group saved the Realms from supernatural destruction during his travels. Evidence supporting this claim has yet to be substantiated.

On a more personal note, Laemos's pathological aggression seems to have lessened appreciably. As an example, he no longer seeks out trouble at every opportunity. The only true hatred that Laemos maintains anymore is his hatred toward paladins. This is not due to moral differences, however. It stems from experiences with a paladin that alledgedly drifted with "The Lost Ones" for a year.

The situation apparently exploded when "The Lost Ones" completed a mission for some king in the southern Realms. During an audience with this king, the paladin calmly explained how Laemos "stole" several magic items which would have been a great boon for the king. Enraged, Laemos sprinted toward the paladin, scooped him up in a bear hug, and dove out a nearby stained-glass window. Unfortunately for the paladin, the window overlooked a 900-foot high cliff.

The king was disgusted with the display and ordered the bodies be left to rot. "The Lost Ones" were expelled from the kingdom without their payment. Laemos soon caught up with "The Lost Ones" after he spent a day regenerating. He also had the gold payment. No one asked how he came by it.

For a long time thereafter, he would try to kill most any paladin on sight. Now he seems content to goad them with insults and degrading gestures. He habitually addresses every paladin he encounters as "Lord Whitebread." His nickname for peace loving magic-users and clerics is "Cream-poof." The puns are definitely intended.

When scholars take all this into account, it seems strange to hear Laemos speaking of having friends. After all, Laemos is one of the most anti-social and amoral creatures ever studied. However, he does have friends, and his loyalty to them is steadfast.

A word of warning is given by the scholars: *Never* underestimate this half-ogre. Laemos is certainly not anybody's fool. No matter how stupid he looks or how ignorant he acts (though he acts as ignorant as any ogre) Laemos is almost as smart as the average human, and he is by far more clever. He is fluent in speaking and writing Thorass. He has also demonstrated more than a little capability when it comes to the tongues of sun elves and dwarves. Yet all this pith is often hidden by the fact that he is truly unable to see the greater scheme of things and lives primarily on a day by day basis.

He has years of fighting experience and is unafraid of most weapons. Constant conditioning has allowed him to hone his skills finer than many experienced veterans. If pressed, he will gladly fight to the death. If enraged, his powerful strength combined with his cunning mind will most definitely spell the death of some unfortunate antagonist.

As a final word on his personality, a DM using Laemos as a NPC should keep in mind that while Laemos is certainly not good, he is by no means evil. His hard life has led to a hard personality. He has been taught that the only person to care for is the old

Numero Uno. It is not likely that anyone will change his attitude since it has been ingrained in him all his life.

Adventure Scenarios With Laemos

There are many possible ways to introduce Laemos to a group of PCs. A few ideas are listed below. These are deliberately left "open ended" to allow the DM to have the maximum freedom with the scenarios.

Scenario #1 The easiest time to introduce Laemos to the party probably will be as the party travels enroute to Ravens Bluff. This does not have to happen the very first time the party travels to the Living City. When the party encounters Laemos, he will have just completed an adventure. He will be irritable since he has not had a good night's sleep in two weeks.

Since Laemos is primarily an ogre, the party may think he is just another monster to be dispatched. This is an understandable first impression, yet Laemos has become weary of it. If he is harassed or attacked, Laemos will retaliate accordingly. If the party tricks him or manages to steal his hard-earned treasure, Laemos will stop just short of nothing in an attempt to get it back. The DM should note that Laemos never forgets a face.

If the PCs do not attack Laemos, he approaches them. Laemos is not looking for trouble, so he will act half-way civil to them. If he is treated well, or if the party does not threaten him, Laemos asks if any of the PCs have been to the city before. If anyone has, he asks for help in finding a place to stay that will be comfortable to him (barns and alleys are not acceptable). Otherwise, he simply departs and continues on his way. He has plenty of money and is not looking to join an adventuring party at this time.

Regardless of the first encounter, Laemos should wind up staying in an inn near where the characters are located. This will make it easier to introduce other scenarios.

Scenario #2 This encounter will be in the streets, and should occur at night.

Laemos is just returning from the local cobbler's hovel and has encountered a group of cutthroats who really don't care to have an ogre in their city. The three humans are drunk and newly indoctrinated into the local militia. This has given them a false sense of courage and strength. Even so, Laemos has decided that it is high time to "correct" their biased viewpoint. Laemos knows the danger he would be in if he killed any of the men, so he is using his bare fists in non-lethal combat. As soon as all three men are unconscious, Laemos leaves. The party should encounter Laemos in the middle of the fight. How Laemos reacts to the presence of the party depends upon how the first encounter went.

If he was attacked by the PCs, Laemos will engage in combat with them after he finishes with the cutthroats. If the party is extremely powerful, Laemos stops beating on them and attempts to leave. He rarely fights anymore unless he has the upper hand.

However, if he was treated well by the PCs, he finishes with the men and tells the party to report an "accident" to the local watch. The moaning of the men should be loud enough to show the party that they are still alive. Laemos will then depart.

Further Scenarios As long as the PCs remain in the city, further encounters are possible.

If the party has been a hardship to Laemos, there is a 10% chance during any given day (non-cumulative) that he will appear and begin harassing the party with verbal insults. Laemos always ensures that the local militia is around in case the PCs decide to take matters into their own hands; he won't swing first because he doesn't want to go to jail. Since Ravens Bluff is a cosmopolitan city, the watch will not be too eager to see an adventuring company trying to kill anyone in their jurisdiction—especially a half-ogre who is spending gold like it is going out of style. Laemos knows this and will try at every opportunity to entrap the party and get them in trouble with the local militia. Laemos always gets even and never lets go of a grudge.

On the other hand, if the party has acted reasonable to Laemos, there is a 25% chance that Laemos will help out the characters if they get into trouble. Laemos has few friends, and if anyone acts well meaning toward him, he will repay the favor. While Laemos never gives up any of his magical items, he may give some of his gold (if any is left) to help any character who has fallen on hard times. If anyone is downright friendly toward Laemos, he may be willing to lend his strength to the party on the next adventure. Laemos will talk all night about the exploits of "The Lost Ones" and tell how he saved the Realms from certain destruction.

PCs might see Laemos wandering the streets; he probably is looking for part-time work to keep him busy for awhile. The local population generally stays well away from him since he *is* an ogre. Recruiters for the local militia, however, constantly hound him.

In the evenings, the party may find Laemos in fighting contests. Usually held in the lower class district, these fights are illegal, but nobody pays much attention. Laemos has been known to fake being hurt so he can drive the wagers up. He always bets on himself. He always wins. ❑

Letters

Continued from page 5

ity event be increased to $5.00 (from the current $3.00) and that judges who run the event contribute their gift certificates to the charity. Lastly, I hope that each and every member who attends the Game Fair registers for the charity event even if they can't find time to play in it.

This might sound like a bit much to some members, but after the sizable investment required for most people to attend the Game Fair, the two-dollar increase is less than a drop in the proverbial bucket.

I am the Regional Director for the west coast, presently living in southern California. I have seen what the Red Cross is doing amid the ruins of the beautiful city of San Francisco and elsewhere. This organization has gone beyond the call of duty in its efforts to reduce the trauma felt by earthquake victims who have lost almost everything—or sometimes everything—that made up their lives.

I hope the membership can agree that contributing to the Red Cross is something that may benefit each of us at some future time in our lives; if not directly, than indirectly through aid rendered to friends or relatives in a disaster area.

We gamers frequently take a beating from the press or others because the games we play are badly misunderstood in some places. Using gaming to contribute to a good cause might well give us all the strength to weather the criticism. More importantly, it may give a non-gamer who has been helped a reason to resist the hatred and bigotry our opponents try to force on others.

Gary Haynes,
Placentia, CA

The HQ staff agrees that the Red Cross is an organization worthy of support. Not long ago there was a convention that donated the proceeds from all its tournaments, Network and otherwise, to the Red Cross.

Although your suggestion is a good one, the charity for the Network benefit tournament at the 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair already has been chosen. It's Okada, an organization that trains dogs to assist the deaf. "Okada" is an American Indian word that means "asking for a place." The name reflects both the services the dogs render to their owners (alerting them to ringing telephones, smoke alarms, crying babies, and other important sounds hearing people take for granted) and to the organization's policy of getting their dogs from animal shelters—usually just before the dogs are due to be destroyed.

Members who are interested in contributing to the American Red Cross might consider organizing their own benefit tournaments or can contribute directly by sending a check or money order to:

American Red Cross
P.O. Box 37247
Washington D.C. 20013

Make checks payable to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. Credit card holders can donate over the phone by calling 1-800-843-7663

We have not yet decided what the benefit tournament fee will be this year. How about it members? Are you willing to pay $5.00 for a charity event that earns you double points?

As for the judges donating their gift certificates, that is something that will remain voluntary. The Network will see to it that any and all returned gift certificates get turned into cash for Okada, but no referee will be required to donate. ❑

The Living Galaxy

Continued from page 20

into their own culture, as the Kronx get along well with spacefaring humans in most other respects.

PCs probably will side with the human minority on Vizahsh, but the humans there are nothing at all like American Indians. These humans are both warlike and racist, and they see it as their holy mission to slay nonhumans (anyone who helps such nonhumans is fair game, too). To make matters worse, the humans believe in a pantheon that demands regular sacrifices of nonhumans—usually animals, but often a civilized creature like a Kronx or other alien, when available.

Adventures: The PCs can come to Vizahsh either to trade with the Kronx (who are friendly and capitalistic) or to smuggle goods and arms to the human tribes (who will only work with "true people"). The PCs could also try to find ways of ending the conflict, such as convincing certain tribes to ally with Kronx settlements. Neither side is completely without honor or sin, but the Kronx are certainly much easier to deal with. This situation could prove to be a deathtrap for naive PCs who believe the underdog is always right or that aliens are less desirable than humans. The humans, though more "primitive" than the Kronx, are far more clever and dangerous on a personal level, and they have few moral objections to getting what they want any way they can.

Notes: The GM should have a working familiarity with American Old West society and folklore, and should be prepared to adapt it to fit the culture of the Kronx (or whatever other alien group is used instead). Let the Kronx be the good guys for the most part, though they may be rather materialistic and shortsighted. The humans should superficially seem to be heroic if doomed, but should turn out to be rather dangerous to everyone (though not worth complete destruction). Maybe there is a simple solution: The humans eat some fungus that causes them to become more violent and less reasonable, or else they are being manipulated by some other party that wishes to give the Kronx a bad time. (Perhaps the secret power behind the human raids is a rival group of Kronx who want the planet for themselves!)

In Short

The first (and only) law of SFRPG campaign design is to never let the universe be boring. Brainstorming stereotypes (and ways to break them) is one of the best ways to keep your universe alive and exciting. As game masters are fond of saying, the only limits are those of your imagination. ❑

Regional Directors

Members with a Mission

These dedicated Network members have volunteered to help other members get the most out of the Network. Regional Directors have membership lists for their regions and can help you locate other members or Network clubs to game with, and can help recruit Network judges for conventions. They also provide all kinds of gaming advice and information on the Network. If you want help from a regional director, send a SASE to the director who serves your area.

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PLAYER LEVELS			JUDGE LEVELS		
LEVEL	**TITLE**	**POINT RANGE**	**LEVEL**	**TITLE**	**POINT RANGE**
0	Novice	0 - 749	0	Rookie	0 - 999
1	Player	750 - 2249	1	Speaker	1000 - 2999
2	Gamer	2250 - 5249	2	Arbiter	3000 - 6999
3	Campaigner	5250 - 11249	3	Moderator	7000 - 14999
4	Strategist	11250 - 23249	4	Proctor	15000 - 30999
5	Tactician	23250 - 48249	5	Referee	31000 - 62999
6	Leader	48250 - 98249	6	Mastermind	63000 - 126999
7	Paragon	98250 - 198249	7	Tribune	127000 - 246999
8	Adventurer	198250 - 398249	8	Judge	247000 - 486999
9	Master Adventurer	398250 - 698249	9	Game Master	487000 - 846999
10	10th Level Master Adventurer	698250 - 1098249	10	10th Level Game Master	847000 - 1326999
11	11th Level Master Adventurer	1098250 - 1598249	11	11th Level Game Master	1327000 - 1926999
12	12th Level Master Adventurer	1598250 - 2189249	12	12th Level Game Master	1927000 - 2646999

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TO BE CONTINUED!